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11

12

13

**F R A N C E S.**

**VOL. III.**



# FRANCES.

BY

MORTIMER COLLINS.

"In our two loves there is but one respect,  
Though in our lives a separable spite."

*Shakespeare : SONNET XXXVI.*

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.



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# FRANCES.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE FATHER CONFESSOR.

“October comes, with its delaying moon,  
And silver mists entangled in the trees,  
And sunset on the seas,  
And the young throstle's tune.

“It smites the undistinguishable green  
Into a myriad bright or tender hues ;  
It sprinkles diamond dew  
From silent skies serene.”

JULIAN ORCHARD.

OCTOBER fell with unusual beauty upon  
England this year. There were few  
rains ; there was no east wind. The juices  
of the various leaves were not deprived of  
power by early frosts, but did their work



slowly, so that the changes of colour were beautiful in their gradations. No leaf fell. The year had a calm old age, like that of some tranquil poet, whose life has been free from fever. The swallows stayed later about the eaves of Monckton Manor, lingering as if loth to leave their English haunts for wild travel across the sea eastward. The party at Sir Charles Wray's enjoyed the time immensely, and Cecilia induced Frances to remain much longer than was at first intended. Frances would have gone before if her brother had seemed to want her, but he appeared from his letters to be much in London, and very busy, and not to want her at all. Still, she felt that Carey Farm wanted her, and a day had been fixed for her leaving.

Frances had a long talk to Mr. Shirley after her conversation with Cecilia. The old gentleman was fond of solitary medita-

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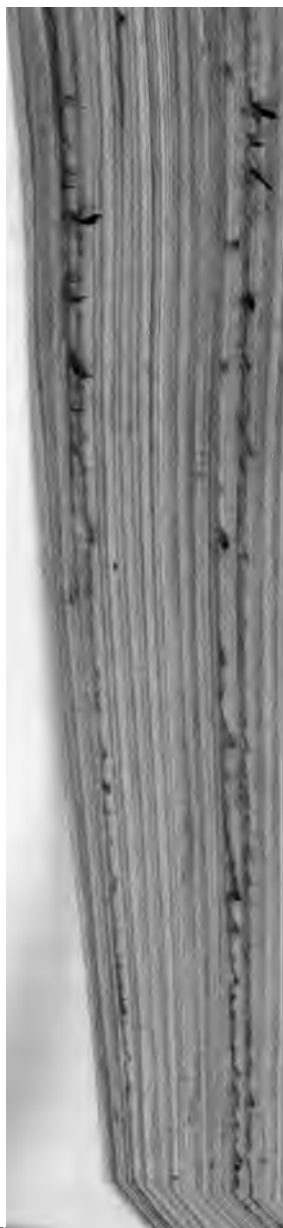
R I.

CONFESSOR.

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JULIAN ORCHARD.

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phatically. "However, this man seems to have fascinated Cecilia, and when we were at the Mayor's the last night, she was foolish enough to take a letter that he offered her. Here it is."

Mr. Shirley read it through, and laughed.

"The insolent rascal ! So that was what brought him to the Cairn the other day, and not antiquities at all ? I hope he enjoyed getting into the bog. Of course she has not answered the fellow ?"

"O dear, no. She is very much ashamed now of having taken the letter ; besides, I think she is getting to like Count Grimani. But when she told me all this, I said she ought to tell her father, and she dreaded doing it so much that I let her off on condition that I might ask your advice."

"Sir Charles would not be at all angry with her ; he regards her as a mere child, and quite expects her to do foolish things.

Still there is no need to trouble him with it. This American will hardly come here again ; if he does, the servants must duck him in a muddy pond, or toss him in a blanket, like Sancho Panza."

"I should like to see it done," quoth Frances, with emphasis. "But now I have another letter to show you."

She handed him Hugh Roland's.

"You have disobeyed orders, Miss Carey," said Gabriel.

"I have not vowed to obey yet ; besides, I am told that vow, when made, is sometimes broken."

"*Obey* is an unfashionable word in these days. So our friend really thinks he has found a clue ? Well, I hope he is right."

"Ah, so do I," said Frances. "But I think I also have found a clue, and I think it is the same. I believe that American who is persecuting Cecilia to be Stephen Heath in disguise."

Gabriel Shirley stood still, and looked in her face, as if to judge thereby whether she really was serious.

"Stephen Heath!" he said. "What makes you think so?"

"The handwriting of this letter. He used to send me dreadfully sentimental verse, which he afterwards got the *Chessington Mercury* to print . . . verses to F. with six stars after it, in which I was compared to everything you can imagine that I'm not a bit like. Now, although there has been an attempt to disguise the writing, I feel sure it is the same. Besides, he dyes his hair; why should he do that?"

"Are you sure he dyes his hair?"

"Quite. You don't think nature would be so cruel as to give anybody hair of that dreadful colour. You can see a darker colour at the roots, when he has not dyed it lately. Cecilia and I both noticed it.

And now that I think how he would have looked with dark hair, I feel sure he was that wretch Heath."

"And you fancy Hugh also recognised him at Southpool?"

"That is the only thing I can think. Now what is to be done, Mr. Shirley? You see I come to you with my own troubles, and little Cecilia's too. If I could be sure of a confessor like you, I should not object to confessing all my sins."

"Ha! do you know what the illustrious poet says?—

'When simple maidens' souls have evil tenants,  
The kindest heart inflicts the keenest penance.'

But I must think over this matter about the American; and, as our party is just going to break up, I will go to London in a day or two and try to trace him. It will be easy enough; American travellers are soon found

in London. Then we'll bring him and our railway-guard face to face."

"O thank you, Mr. Shirley; you always are so very kind. It is a shame to give you so much trouble."

"I like trouble," he answered. "Trouble is an essential element in human happiness. Why does a young lord with a hundred thousand a year throw away his money on horses and dice and worse things? Because he can never be thoroughly happy until he gets into trouble. Now as I was born without trouble of my own—for I have neither loves nor debts nor aches—I am obliged to bear part of the troubles of other people."

Frances laughed at this paradox.

"And Cecilia?" she said. "What is her penance to be?"

"Why to fall deeper in love every hour with Count Cassius. Can there be anything severer."

"Nothing, except your irony. But will Count Grimani ever be able to forget his lost Lucia."

"I don't think he will," said Shirley, gravely.

"O then how *can* Cecilia marry him?" cried Frances.

"You see, my dear Miss Carey, Grimani is a poet. He made a pet and a pupil of his little cousin ; but I don't believe he had any passion for her, or would have married her if she had lived. Having lost her, he thinks otherwise. Your poet cannot do without a grief, real or imaginary ; and this imaginary grief will be an immense resource to our friend when he is consumedly bored by having his way too much. As the illustrious poet hath it :

'Even the bee grows tired of honeycomb,  
And for a change brings something better home.'

Count Cassius will have a vision of Lucia to



sadden him a little, when that beautiful creature of mirth has gladdened him only too much. So let Cecilia accept her penance—and tell her what I say.”

Thus ended for the time Miss Carey’s conference with her father confessor. They walked to the house ; when they reached it, Mr. Shirley found his letter from Hugh Roland—found also that the American Consul at Southpool had arrived, and was having luncheon in the library with Sir Charles Wray. He was going to London, and found he could spend one night at Monckton Manor on his way. Everyone was glad to see him.

“You expect to enjoy London, I am sure,” said Sir Charles.

“I do indeed. It is the supreme expression of the English race. All our virtues and vices are to be seen there in the intensest form. I expect much of London . . . not

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merely from its great men of all classes, from its brilliant society, from its marvellous financial power, but also from its pauperism and crime. The shadows of life are as well worth study as its lights."

"Not a pleasant study," said Mr. Shirley.

"That is as you view it. If God permitted sin, it was that man might study it, in order to conquer it. There is an essay in my book . . . essayists are always egoists, so pardon me . . . called *Ahrimanes*: it is an attempt to analyse and account for that evil principle which all religions and superstitions endow with a personality. Now if Ahrimanes or Satan be a person, it is obvious that he possesses one of the essential attributes of Deity . . . namely, Omnipresence. He is with everyone of us. Hence I argue that what we call the evil principle is really the testing power exercised by the Divinity. As poet or maker, He created the world;

as critic, He tries every minute portion of His own work. That is my theory."

"It seems to disestablish a great power," said Sir Charles Wray.

"Ay, and the Manichæans will have nobody to worship," observed Count Cassius. "You American thinkers have a noble audacity to attack such a time-honoured personage as the Devil himself."

"We are rather wanting in reverence," said the Consul, gravely.

Before Frances went to dress for dinner, Mr. Shirley had found time to read Hugh's letter: he handed it to her, having pencilled upon it:

"I shall go to London with the Consul to-morrow. He may be useful. Of course you have no message?"

No message! Had she not? How rapidly a woman's love grows towards her lover when he is in any trouble! Though

there was a remarkably pleasant evening before Frances . . . just the sort of evening she enjoyed, with four men of high intelligence and most various character to hold converse . . . yet she longed to have it all over, so that she might sit down and pour out her soul on paper to Hugh.

However, she found time to tell Cecilia her penance—whereat that young lady blushed and laughed. And, although she was thinking all the while of Hugh Roland, she talked so well at dinner, and after, that the Consul thought her character worth studying, and decided that, if American women have the most eccentricity, English women have the most originality.”

“What a grand cricket-match that was at Southpool, Mr. Shirley!” said the Consul, when they were in the drawing-room. “Only Englishmen can play cricket. I judge nations by the out-door, and indi-

viduals by the indoor, games they prefer.

"How as to the latter?" asked Sir Charles.

"Well," said the Consul, "do you like chess or whist best?"

"I have seldom played either, but I should say—chess."

"So I should have thought: and from it I infer that you would consider the destiny of a man to be moulded by his character. There are two classes of men: those who are content to yield to circumstances, and who play whist: those who aim to control circumstances, and who play chess."

"Then what sort of people are those who play bézique?" asked Mr. Shirley.

"Bézique! I don't know it."

"Well, I know little of it, except that I have seen it played, and that it seemed intolerably monotonous, but with some absurdly large chances. It is the fashion of

the moment, I am told. I dare say either of these young ladies could describe it to you."

"I never played anything in my life," said Cecilia, "except beggar-my-neighbour—and that I have forgotten."

"Bézique," said Frances, "seems to have been invented to suit the mingled monotony and excitement of the present day. It is played with two packs of cards; the score is a thousand; trick after trick may be played, and the players remain pretty equal, when suddenly five hundred are counted for double bézique, or two hundred and fifty for a sequence. There is scarcely any skill in it; the players plod on, waiting for a stroke of good luck. I should think it must have been invented on the Stock Exchange."

"It certainly looks rather like gambling," said the General.

"Miss Carey's description of *béziq*ue may be fitted into your theory I should think, Mr. Orchard," said Shirley. "The lover of the game is the veriest slave of chance; he speculates for double *béziq*ue as the stock-broker speculates for a rise; he reflects the gambling passion of the age. I understand now why a game which appears to me intensely stupid is quite the fashion. It suits the temper of the time."

"I am greatly obliged to you, Miss Carey," said the Consul, "for your original contribution to a pet theory of mine. In our own country we have among the go-ahead classes games in which chance predominates over skill in the absurdest way, such as *euchre* and *poker*. *Whist* is at a discount among us . . . too slow by far."

"I claim for Italy more invention and variety—I will say more poetry—in connexion with cards than any other country can show," said the Count.

"Your everlasting three court cards—king, queen, knave—seem to me very dull. Has anyone here heard anything of the game of tarots? Has anyone seen a pack of tarot cards? I have a treatise on the game in my library at Florence, and several packs of tarots—painted, mind you, by great painters of the time, so that every card is a picture. I knew the game when I was a boy, but have forgotten it in my travels; so far as I recollect, there are seventy-eight cards in the pack, and seven court cards in each suit. I know it is a game full of marvellous combinations. We have several others just as full of variety, and the choice old packs are all miniatures beautifully painted. I shall investigate the subject when I return to Florence; and if I can find a complete pack of tarots, Mr. Orchard, I will send you one."

"Many thanks, Count Grimani. I had



never before heard of these wonderful Italian games. When there is so much invention, and the painter's art is called in to render the game sumptuous and superb, it passes out of the category of our commonplace whist and piquet and ombre. I shall look with contempt in future on our ugly kings and queens and knaves, and have a vision of your brilliant procession of seven court cards, each painted by a master's brush. This is the very poetry of play."

"What would they say to it at the Portland or the Arlington," said Sir Charles, "where short whist has become a science?"

"Ha!" quoth Gabriel Shirley, "they would laugh at us all finely for listening to Count Cassius. But I would rather play such poetic games as the Count describes than sit down to whist for money merely, with all Clay's dodges at my fingers' ends."

The evening did not end without song.

Julian Orchard's poems have reached England; Count Cassius had set one or two of them to music—so that Miss Wray, when asked to sing, was able to surprise the American poet with a canzonet of his own.

“O touch that rosebud! it will bloom—  
My lady fair!

A passionate red in dim green gloom,  
A joy, a splendour, a perfume  
That sleeps in air.

“You touched my heart; it gave a thrill  
Just like a rose  
That opens at a lady's will;  
Its bloom is always yours until  
You bid it close.”

“You give me,” said the Consul, “the choicest flattery in the world. I find my poor verses set to delicious music, and sung by lovely lips. I shall begin to think that the perfection of courtesy is to be found in England, and in no other country.”

That evening, when the mirthful and musical Cecilia had long been fast asleep,

our faithful heroine sat down to write to Hugh. It was strange, she thought, their relation to each other. She had liked Hugh very well, but had been quite unconscious of any love for him before he suffered his great disaster; now, though she had seen so little of him since, she felt as if she had loved him all her life. There must have been some germ of love before; she must have loved him a little without knowing it. Any way, she knew it well enough now; and she wrote him such a long and loving epistle that if Ovid had seen it he would have turned it at once into exquisite elegiacs. It was very near daybreak when Frances sealed her packet, and then, going to bed, fell rapidly into a dreamless sleep.

But she was up early, nevertheless, and was out upon the terrace before the sun had evaporated their millions of dew-spherules from the slender silvery threads of gossamer

that covered the lawns, and found that Mr. Shirley was out before her, walking up and down briskly, and delightedly drinking the fresh morning air.

"Here is my message, Mr. Shirley," she said, with a gay smile, putting into his hand a packet big enough to contain an essay on woman's rights for the *Weekly Amazon*. "I hope it will not inconvenience you."

"I would carry it, were it twice the size," said Mr. Shirley. "You are going back to Avonside soon, I believe. I should like to know where you are, in case of wanting to communicate in a hurry."

"I go to Carey Farm the day after tomorrow, and am not at all likely to leave home again. This is far the longest outing I have had since Papa died."

After breakfast a carriage came round, and the Consul and Mr. Shirley started for the rail. They caught an express train and

had a carriage to themselves. On the way the conversation naturally turned on the party they had left behind at Monckton Manor.

"Already," said the Consul, "I think I see one remarkable difference between English and Americans. You aim to be uniform, yet are original: we try to be original, yet are only eccentric. Some of my countrywomen do the most astonishing things in their desire to be original; yet, if we look at them closely, disregarding all their external oddities of behaviour, they appear very commonplace people indeed."

Gabriel Shirley, remembering his brief glimpse of the ladies known as Butts, completely concurred, and mentioned to the Consul the vagaries of Aspasia and Susannetta.

"Butts!" said the Consul laughing—"those people in London! They are a regular set

of swindlers ! Well, compare Aspasia and Susanetta with the two charming girls we have just left. They both have real character. I suppose they are both in love, Mr. Shirley ?”

“ Why that supposition ?—unless, indeed, you hold with the illustrious poet :

‘ Aurelia vows she loves not. Foolish elf !  
Too thoroughly enamoured of herself ! ’ ”

“ No, mine is no general theory. I argue from observation. When Cecilia sang my little song more melodiously than the saint her namesake could have done it, it was easy to see her rosebud of a heart had opened to that handsome melancholy Italian. Will he transplant that flower to his palace in the City of Flowers ?”

“ It seems not unlikely,” said Mr. Shirley. “ You appear to observe women very closely.”

“ There is no choicer study. Your cynical

poet who wrote :

‘Most women have no character at all,’

showed simply his own incapacity for discerning the subtle shades of character. If a man were to tell you that most flowers have no fragrance at all, you would distrust his sense of smell, even though he tried to prove his keenness of nostril by detecting the difference between asafetida and liquid ammonia.”

“O, I quite agree with you. Now, give me the result of your observation with regard to Miss Carey.”

“I fancy she has a romance. In the midst of our briskest talk I noted a far-away look in her eyes, as if she was dreaming of some one elsewhere.”

“You are a wizard, Orchard,” said Shirley. “Yes, she has a romance, which I’ll disclose to you confidentially in few words. There were two young fellows who used to

visit at her brother's house, both of whom were, to some extent, attracted by her. One disappeared, under conditions that made murder seem probable, and a body was found in the river, which his father identified. The other, who, to repeat your distinction, was rather original than eccentric, was accused, and convicted of the murder, but was considered mad, and sent to an asylum. He escaped. He is now a guard on this very railway."

"Not guard of this train, I hope?"

"No, he is away on leave. Now, before I go farther, tell me what you know of the Butts family."

"Why, what in the world has that to do with your story?" asked the Consul.

"I will tell you in good time. Let me have an account of the Buttses."

"They are notorious swindlers, that is all. The man, who calls himself a major, is one



of the most adroit and successful scoundrels that even New York has produced. The women, under their appearance of absurd eccentricity, have a fine capacity for villany : one of them—I don't know whether it is the old one or the young one—is reputed to be the best forger out."

"A nice family," said Mr. Shirley. "You don't think a respectable American gentleman would be likely to travel in their company?"

"I emphatically do not."

"Well, they have as companion a young man who wears very yellow hair, and a vast amount of showy jewelry. He is known as the Honourable Hercules Lyon. Can you recollect any such person? He gives himself the airs of a millionaire."

"We have plenty of Honourables about, but there isn't much real yellow hair in our country. Our favourite colours in hair are

shiny black or dingy drab. No: I cannot make anything of this Lyon. But now, what is the reason of this catechism?"

"I return to Miss Carey," said Gabriel Shirley. "She believes not, neither do I, that Hugh Roland—our railway-guard, you know—murdered his rival, whose name is Heath. We believe that Heath absconded, being deeply in debt, purposely leaving such traces as would make people believe Roland had murdered him. Of course we can't account for the body, but the identification did not satisfy everybody. And both Miss Carey and Roland, acting independently, came suddenly to believe that this honourable gentleman with Major Butts is really Stephen Heath in disguise, come over here to play some nefarious game. Your description of Butts makes this seem possible."

"I thought that child had a romance,"

said the Consul. "What a charming imbroglio! How do matters advance?"

"Roland, having got leave of absence from the railway, is in town looking for this man Lyon. When they meet the question will be soon settled. I am going to see Roland to-day, and hope to hear that he has had some success."

"Will you dine with me at Morley's afterwards, and report progress? I begin to feel extreme interest in this curious romance."

"I am glad you do, for your knowledge of the Butts family may perhaps help me a little. I should like to make London too hot for them."

"People of that sort," said the Consul, "whether English in America or Americans in England, do an immense amount of harm. They prejudice the citizens of each country

against each other. I wish such fellows could be kept at home."

When the train reached London, Gabriel Shirley drove straight to the hotel from which Roland dated, and inquired for "Mr. Graham." The waiter told him that Mr. Graham was staying there, and had left his luggage in his room, but had not been at home for two nights.

"The strangest thing is, sir," said the waiter, "that he ordered dinner on Thursday to be ready at five, as he was going to the theatre, and he went out about four, and we haven't seen him since."

Gabriel Shirley began to fear that Hugh Roland had been recognized and fallen into the hands of the police, especially as he found on inquiry that Lyon was still at the Colossus: and he went to Morley's to meet the Consul in rather a disgusted mood. There was nothing to be done but wait.

Julian Orchard heartily sympathized with him, and did his utmost to console him by a nice little dinner, with choice wine and recondite talk.

## CHAPTER II.

## FRANCES AT HOME.

“True to the kindred points of heaven and home.”

THE pleasures of home have been sung and said so many a time that there is nothing to add on the subject. “Home is home, be it ever so homely!” saith the quaint old adage; and, to a certain extent, we may say that the homelier it is the better. I have known the dweller in a superb palace select for himself some small sanctum, which he kept as the very heart of home.

Frances Carey, though glad to get home after her pleasant rambles, had reasons for

dissatisfaction. Walter had written to tell her that unexpected business kept him in London (the fact being that he was fiercely resolved to hunt down Hugh Roland), and further, that Heathside having been burnt down, he had offered his friend, Captain Heath, rooms at Carey Farm, and hoped she would do her best to make him comfortable. Now Frances had no special affection for Captain Heath. The stiff old veteran had a haughty manner, which she resented; he seemed to think himself a great deal superior to anyone else in Avonside. What were these mere yeomen and farmers in comparison with an officer in Her Majesty's Army? The Captain had a high and mighty manner, with which he sought to extinguish those who had never served the Crown, or seen the world. Frances found that it had become more developed since his recent London campaign. Indeed,

what with winning money at cards, and becoming director of several companies, and being flattered and fooled by a wicked little witch of an actress, Captain Heath had rather lost his head.

When Frances walked across the lawn, and was heartily received by Rachel, and found a fire burning (for the afternoon was damp), and fragrance of tea in the oak parlour, her first feeling was delight to be at home again. She forgot her visitor, as she sat in her accustomed chair, while Rachel poured tea into a delicate cup of china, and tempted her appetite with home-made brown bread, and butter just fresh from the churn. But she was soon destined to be reminded of it.

“There’ll be a good dinner for you at seven, miss, if cook and the Captain’s man don’t spoil it between them. Cook’s that indignant, I’m comprehensive she’ll give



warning. For that Boyd is dreadful interfering, and tells her she does everything as wrong as can be."

"What, is Boyd here too?" said Frances, surprised.

"O yes, miss. He's the Captain's teetotum. Now, this morning, hearing you was to be home to dinner, the Captain brought in a turbot and some oysters and two pheasants, and said that was to help out the dinner. It was very kind of him; but cook and Boyd have been in a squabblation ever since, and if there's anything fit to eat on the table, it's my belief it'll have cooked itself."

As Rachel seemed unable to suppress her feelings, Frances went off to her room to dress, and get a little quiet. She felt certain, beforehand, that Captain Heath would patronize her, and be condescendingly kind, and courteous, with an air of superiority. Had her brother been at home she need not

have had much intercourse with him, but now that the whole duty of entertaining him would fall on her, she felt as if it would be unendurable.

And when dinner-time came, and he took her in ceremoniously, and she found herself with only a soup-tureen placed like an earth-work between her and her military besieger, she could not help feeling that the situation was rather ridiculous. Captain Heath, wiry, bolt upright, iron-grey, in an irreproachable dress suit, with Boyd in a white tie behind his chair, was a picture at which Frances wanted to laugh, but dared not.

"I hope you had a pleasant visit, Miss Carey," says the Captain, presently. "You have been at Southpool, I believe?"

"Yes, for a short time," replied Frances. "It is a very gay town, if I may judge from the week I was there."

"I know very little of it," said Captain

Heath. "The only town I care about is London. You would like London, if you knew it well, Miss Carey. Boyd, sherry to Miss Carey."

"I think I prefer the country to any city," she said.

"Ah, you are young, and have no experience of life. The country is all very well for children. But we tire of it as we get wiser. I should not like to return to pap after drinking such claret as my friend Walter has in his cellar."

"The wretch ! Drinking dear papa's best claret, no doubt !" she thought.

"I am almost glad Heathfield is burnt down," he continued. "I shall not rebuild it. When I have settled my affairs, I think of living in London altogether."

Frances heartily wished these affairs speedily settled—a feeling that was enhanced when, before passing the claret-jug,

he suggested that probably she did not care about claret : young ladies seldom did.

“I am an exception,” said Frances. “Papa taught me to like claret, and used to say I was as good a judge as himself.”

So the Captain had not a whole bottle of that choice Lafitte to himself that day : but Frances would not have grudged him a second bottle if it would have kept him in the dining-room, so that she might follow her own devices in the oak parlour. This, however, was not to be : Captain Heath soon rose from the table and came in search of coffee and amusement. His lonely evenings at Carey Farm had bored him terribly : he thought they might perhaps be less slow if this little girl would exert herself to amuse him. As he sat comfortably in his chair, slowly sipping that claret which Frances deemed it sacrilege for him to drink, he speculated on her capabilities. That a girl

should be able to talk sensibly on any subject did not occur to Captain Heath, who all his life long had considered himself a superior member of the superior sex. Of course she could sing and play: girls could all sing and play, just as all gnats buzz and all sheep baa: but music was not at all in the Captain's line, except indeed one of Ethel Clinton's breakdowns. Perhaps she could play cards: hardly likely though that she would know any game more scientific than cribbage: besides, what good was there in playing cards for nothing? The Captain feared that on the whole this young woman would not be very much use in the way of amusement.

Frances took the Captain's advent as patiently as she could. She gave him a better cup of coffee than he had tasted previously at Carey Farm, for when she was at home the servants knew that they must

make the water boil. Few things are less accountable in reference to servants than their reluctance to boil water. The Captain enjoyed his coffee, and said so ; and by-and-by, after a little preliminary conversation, he asked Frances if there was any game she would like to play.

"I used to play chess with papa," she said, "but it is a long time since I have had a game."

"O, chess is very dull," said the Captain, who did not know the moves. "I was thinking of cards. Can you play piquet or *écarté*?"

"I don't know piquet at all," she said, "but I can play *écarté* a little, I think. Would you like a game? I thought gentlemen did not care to play except for money?"

"Well, that does add excitement to a game," said the Captain. "But there are some games so interesting that they scarcely

need the stimulus, and I think écarté is one."

"I will try to find a pack of cards," said Frances.

They were found, and the game began. Captain Heath found it quite stimulant enough, without guinea points and ten on the game. To his intense surprise he was easily beaten. The king seemed to have fallen in love with Frances, and to be always on her side. Luck at cards is said to signify unlucky love : poor Frances ! Luck at cards may be regarded in two ways . . . the mathematical and the poetical. The doctrine of Probability teaches us to expect phenomena in all things similar to what is called a "run of luck" in cards. Stand in Fleet Street and watch the cabs, omnibuses, and other vehicles ; they are a continuous row, impossible to pass, for many minutes ; then for perhaps as many minutes they pass at slow intervals, and the street is almost

clear. It is the same in all human events controlled by chance. The thorough card-player calculates on the run of luck, as do gamblers on all the roulette-tables and all the exchanges of the world. *Rouge gagne : back rouge*. Irish Land shares are going down : buy when they sink pretty low, for they are sure to rise again. This is the way speculators reason.

As to the poetical side of the question, hear Shakespeare, the infallible. The sooth-sayer says to Antony concerning Octavius :

“If thou dost play with him at any game,  
Thou’rt sure to lose : he’s of that natural luck  
He beats thee ’gainst the odds.”

Mark Antony reluctantly admits this to himself :

“The very dice obey him :  
And in our sports my better cunning faints  
Under his chance ; if we draw lots, he speeds :  
His cocks do win the battle still of mine,  
When it is all to nought ; and his quails ever  
Beat mine, in-cooped at odds.”



As a fact, there are men whose luck surpasses that of other men. The most successful speculators have discovered this. "Never employ a man," said old Rothschild to his sons, "who has been unlucky for himself; he will be unlucky for you." Rothschild was perhaps right; although he did not calculate on that turn of luck which infallibly comes, sooner or later. Dickens, with the intuition of genius, and without reasoning about it at all, hit the true philosophy when he made the "dirty and delightful Micawber" succeed at the Antipodes. I have known a precisely parallel case.

Frances beat Captain Heath game after game.

"What wonderful luck you have!" he exclaimed, with a touch of chagrin. "I used to think myself lucky at cards, and have often won a thousand pounds in the

time we have passed this evening ; but your good fortune is really wonderful."

It was, assuredly. But Frances had an advantage over Captain Heath which he failed to detect. Écarté is the one game on the cards in which physiognomy is of value. You look, not only at your own hand, but also at your adversary's countenance, before you decide whether to propose, whether to accept or decline a proposal. Now, as Captain Heath was eager to win, and greatly disgusted at being beaten by a girl, his hand was always clearly legible in his countenance ; whereas Frances really cared nothing about it, so that there was nothing to be learnt by looking at her.

"There is no playing against you, Miss Carey," said the Captain, after half-a-dozen games. "You are wonderfully fortunate."

"The worst players usually get the best hands, I am told," she said.

Captain Heath very soon went off to his room, disgusted with himself for having been beaten at *écarté* by a girl. Gamblers are always superstitious; he began to fear that his luck had deserted him, and as it brought him a very fair income, he did not relish the idea.

"I'll run up to town to-morrow," he said to himself, "and see how things go. There'll be some play at the Chandos. Hang it! Fancy losing a dozen games in succession to a country girl!—I, who am the best player in England! It's damnable!"

So strong was the Captain's feeling on the subject that he threw his boot-jack at Boyd, who caught it deftly, and said,

"Thank you, sir."

"I go to town to-morrow, Boyd," said the Captain. "Ten train up. You must come. No need for luggage; there's all I

want in Jermyn Street. I can only stay one night."

"All right, sir," said Boyd.

When Frances was left alone she felt a little melancholy. She had enjoyed her visits to Southpool and Monckton Manor; she had delighted in the new friends she had made, all people of a class very different from the rather common-place population of Avonside; and if she had returned to Carey Farm undisturbed and solitary, she would have lost herself in happy reverie, and conjured up pictures of the Count and Cecilia at Monckton Manor, of Mr. Shirley wandering in search of Hugh. And then she would have had as much time as ever she liked to wonder what Hugh was doing, and to draw pictures of him in the future, free from all his troubles, ready to enjoy tranquil happiness. But Captain Heath, with his dry conventional ideas, and his

patronizing airs, drove her pleasant dreams so far away, they looked like migratory birds fading into the sunset sky. She could not recover the broken thread of happy thought.

However, as she sat alone in her chair, gazing into the changeable depths of a sea-coal fire that had reached its latter end, she found solace in what Rachel had to tell her.

"Well, miss," said that outspoken domestic, "I hope you like playing cards with the Captain. He's been swearing at you, Boyd says, like a good un . . . that's what Boyd says, I should say a bad un rather. His words and phrases were that execrations I couldn't repeat them. And now he's going off in a huff to London to-morrow morning—and Boyd with him—and I'm sure I wish they'd both stay in the great Necropolis, as I saw it called in print."

Frances felt just like a schoolgirl with a promise of a holiday. She brightened up.

"I suppose the Captain won't stay long, Rachel?" she said.

"Only one night, miss. However, please God, there might be a railway incident, and they might have compound fractions in some of them funnels."

"Rachel, how can you talk so?" said Frances, laughing. "Captain Heath is not very amusing, but I don't want him to have his bones broken in a railway accident."

"Well, miss," said Rachel, calmly, "if them railway collusions could be trusted only to make away with the ill-convenient people, I think they ought to be encouraged. Them dissectors, or whatever they are, when they want to smash a train, ought to advertise for passengers—people that are very much in everybody's way. They needn't take return tickets!"

Next morning at breakfast, the Captain told Miss Carey he was going to town till the following day. Could he do anything for her ?

"Shall you see Walter, Captain Heath ?" she asked.

"Most certainly. Can I say anything to him for you ?"

"Only that I shall be glad to see him at home again. It is rather dull here without him, and of course the business of the farm does not go on as well. Could you not persuade him to come back with you ?"

"I will try," said Heath. "But the fact is, Miss Carey, he said he had some business on hand that could not be left for a moment, and he must stay till it was over. I don't know what it is, but he was evidently very much in earnest. Perhaps he will have finished his business when I see him to-day."

"I hope he may," said Frances. "You had better bring him back, for your own sake, Captain Heath, for I am sure you will soon find the evenings dull and slow, with no amusement except playing *écarté* with a bad player."

When Heath was gone, Frances had time to wander over her demesne, and talk to her animals, and hold counsel with the garden. The flower-beds at Carey Farm were very beautiful, though they could not compare with the superb array of colour at Monckton Manor. The slow Autumn, as yet untouched by frost, had spared the tenderest flowers; there was scent of *heliotrope* everywhere, and the *Gloire de Dijon* rose defied Autumn to destroy its beauty. Frances had her gardens, her pigeons and poultry, her horses and dogs to talk to; then she had to hear a long lecture from Rachel, about things that ought to have been done



long ago—about the making of quince marmalade, medlar jelly, and other autumnal confections. It was a long and busy morning, this first of her return home ; but it was over at last, and she ate a bit of Captain Heath's cold pheasant, and started off to the Hollies to see Miss Hutchison.

All this time she feared the dear old lady had been very lonely. She almost reproached herself for going off on her pleasant expeditions to Southpool and Sir Charles Wray's. She knew what Miss Hutchison felt about this scapegrace nephew of hers ; and, now that there appeared a gleam of hope, she set off gaily towards the Hollies, wishing to make the old lady feel more cheerful. A pleasant fire burnt in the parlour at the Hollies, and Miss Hutchison sat beside it knitting, when Frances entered. Very glad was the old lady to see her friend again.

“You look quite blooming after your holiday, Frances,” she said. “Have you enjoyed it? You must tell me all your adventures. Only think of Heathfield being burnt down, and poor Captain Heath obliged to stay at your house! How do you like him as a visitor, my dear? What a pity your brother is not at home to entertain him!”

“Yes, I miss Walter very much, but I hope he will soon return. Captain Heath will see him in London to-day, and perhaps they will come back together. I don’t think Captain Heath cares much for the company of a girl like me; however, I managed to amuse him last night by playing cards with him.”

“A girl like you indeed!” said Miss Hutchison, angry at her favourite’s self-depreciation. “Why, you are as clever as half-a-dozen of him. I hope you beat him

at cards ; I'm sure he wouldn't like it."

"Well, I did beat him," said Frances with a laugh, "and he did not seem to like it."

Miss Hutchison had old-fashioned notions of country hospitality, and was rude enough to offer refreshment to the friends who called upon her, whatever the hour. Modern politeness has wisely put an end to this old custom, which, in my youth, I used to think a pleasant one. But I retract my opinion, being convinced that eating and drinking are vulgar things, to be discouraged as much as possible ; and that with the present high prices, the man who would offer his friend a glass of wine and a biscuit is a prodigal, whose name will probably appear in the *Gazette*. But as Miss Hutchison belonged to the last generation, perhaps she may be forgiven for her solecism in causing white cream cheese and delicate crisp bis-

cuits and decanters of white wine and red to be placed on the table for Frances' entertainment. That young lady, knowing what would happen, had retarded her revelations concerning Hugh till the refection appeared, thinking that perhaps Miss Hutchison would need a glass of wine if suddenly excited.

And now she led the conversation to Hugh Roland—in the first place, by quoting some of Rachel's ludicrous remarks about his occupation. Rachel had scarcely ever travelled by rail, and when she did, was quite uncertain about how she came to her journey's end. To her these wildly-rushing trains were a terror and a mystery; and the accidents she heard people talk of alarmed her more; and when she heard that Mr. Hugh had turned railway-guard she was quite bewildered.

"La! miss," she said, "do you mean to

say Mr. Hugh whirls about in those screaming things all day long? I hope it isn't him that smashes those poor creatures every day or so? I call it downright wicked to travel without the horses that God meant to draw carriages. If I had to go to London, I'd tramp on my own honest legs rather than go hissing and screaming over the country, and perhaps coming back with no legs at all."

Miss Hutchison, amused at Rachel's oddities, seemed in such good spirits that Frances ventured to say:

"I saw your nephew at Southpool, Miss Hutchison."

"Saw him! O, how did he look? Is he very tired of being on the railway?"

"He did not seem so; and he was looking very well, and was not at all melancholy. But he is not on the railway just at present. He has got a short holiday."

"Why does he do it?" said Miss Hutchi-

son. "He was always so rash. He will get into danger, I am sure. I know he will be taken back to that dreadful Asylum."

"Don't be alarmed, dear Miss Hutchison. He is doing all for the best, I assure you. I believe he will be able to come home to you very soon. We have reason to be almost sure that Stephen Heath is now in England, alive: and Hugh is now looking for him. He knows where to find him, and I am expecting to hear good news by every post."

The old lady was so taken by surprise that the glass of port which Frances administered was very necessary. But she could not believe in the possibility of such good fortune.

"You young people are so sanguine, Frances. You have had no experience of the sad disappointments of life. I have had too much. You never heard, I dare say,

that when I was about your age I was engaged to be married to Hugh's father's brother. My sister and I were to marry the two brothers the same day. Just a week before the time fixed, when they were riding over to see us, Arthur was thrown from his horse and fatally injured. He died within half an hour: there was not time to bring the clergyman, or I would have married him on his death-bed: but I always look upon myself as his wife. And poor Hugh is so like Arthur—much more like him, in look and in character, than his own father. I have always been afraid for him . . . always."

"I believe you will see him very soon, dear Miss Hutchison, healthy and safe and free from all trouble. What a wretch that Stephen Heath must be!"

"I never liked him—never. He was always so very polite, and yet seemed to

laugh at you. When he was as civil as you please I could see that he was saying to himself—‘What a bore that old woman is!’ O, I can see through those plausible young people, Frances, though I am obliged to wear spectacles.”

“He did not seem at all sincere,” said Frances. “I am afraid he is engaged in some wicked business or other now, else why should he be going about disguised, and under a false name? What a trouble it will be to his father!”


“I don’t think very much better of Captain Heath than of Stephen,” said the old lady. “There are queer stories about his doings in London. It’s not going to church twice on Sunday with a big prayer-book that makes a man: and the people who came down with four horses, and kept him away from service one Sunday morning, were neither church-folk nor Christians, I



should fancy. Those people would have been set in the stocks for Sabbath-breaking in my grandfather's time, and the woman would have been drummed out of the parish after a night in the lock-up. No : I've had no opinion of the Captain since that Sunday."

There was a vein of puritanism in Miss Hutchison's character—a family inheritance. Her grandfather, a county magistrate in Warwickshire, had in his time been famous for dealing with all rogues and vagabonds with a high hand.


Frances said no word of her brother's discovery of Hugh Roland, knowing that this would terribly alarm Miss Hutchison. After a little more chat, she left the old lady in a cheerful and almost hopeful frame of mind, and passed a busy day at Carey Farm, putting in order, with Rachel's indefatigable aid, the thousand little things



that go wrong in the best-ordered establishment when its mistress is away.

Frances had a quiet evening before her, without *écarté*, without Captain Heath's improving conversation. She would dine quietly on the surplus of yesterday's banquet: what could be nicer than cold pheasant? She would read some favourite book by the fire in the oak parlour, and then go quietly to bed, some time between ten and eleven. Such was her plan for the evening: what a pity our plans are ever disturbed!

At any rate, a portion of the programme was fulfilled. Frances had her soup and cold bird, and her cup of tea and favourite volume by the fire, and read very little indeed, but fell into a reverie. This was an exciting moment in her romance. She longed for morning, which ought to bring news from Gabriel Shirley. She had but little fear of the ultimate result, feeling cer-



tain of the identity of Lyon with Stephen Heath, and confident that if Hugh failed to unmask him, Mr. Shirley would succeed. Still, knowing her brother's obstinate perseverance, she could not dismiss the apprehension that Hugh himself might be overtaken before he had carried out his design—and that would be such a grievous disappointment.

In the midst of her reverie Rachel entered. Frances, sitting in a comfortable lounging-chair, in a dress of violet silk with much white lace at bosom and wrist, her book lying on her lap, her eyes fixed dreamily on the fire, which flickered on the dark oak panels, was a very pretty picture . . . deserving perhaps a more æsthetic observer than kind old Rachel. When Rachel entered, she looked up lazily: but there was an expression, a perplexed and frightened expression, in the old servant's face, which

awoke her from her musings, and made her exclaim,

“Why, Rachel, what’s the matter?”

“It’s Mr. Hugh, miss. He’s outside. He came and tapped at my window. I’m not soon frightened, so I opened it: and then I saw him, looking tired, but uncommon well: and he whispered . . . *Rachel, I want to sleep in one of your hay-lofts to-night.* So I thought, miss, your pigeon-loft would be the place, because you keep the key, and he’d be quite safe.”


“But what is his reason for coming here?” she asked, in amazement, full of fear that something dreadful had happened.

“He didn’t tell *me*, miss: I daresay he’ll tell *you* when he sees you. Had I better put him up in your loft? There’s plenty of straw.”

Now this particular loft was the upper storey of an outhouse, the lower part of

which was used for storing grain. The loft was approached by steps from the outside, and was divided into two compartments, the inner of which Frances had given up to a favourite breed of tumbler pigeons, that were both picturesque in aerial gyration and plump on the breakfast-table. Their section of the loft was cut out of the whole in such a way that there was a narrow recess behind it, where trusses of straw generally lay: and in the outer part Frances used to keep her out-door nick-nacks, her own special garden-tools, her bulbs and seeds, a hundred things which she would trust to no one else. The place was her private workshop, so that Rachel had thought of the likeliest corner possible for perfect concealment.

But this sudden appeal puzzled Frances, and alarmed her. What could have happened that Hugh should come late at night



to seek refuge at Carey Farm? She imagined all manner of horrors. She sat irresolute. Rachel said :

“ Give me the key, miss : I’ll take care of him. He says you’re not on any account to come out, for fear of the servants. He’s waiting quiet in the shrubbery, and I’ll take a lantern, and show him where the straw is, and give him some bread and beef and beer.”

“ Thank you, Rachel,” said Frances, handing her the key. “ I am so anxious about Mr. Roland that I did not know what to do : but your plan is a good one. The loft is warm, and I know you will try to make him comfortable. Tell him I shall come to see him at five to-morrow morning : if any of the men are about they will not be surprised, as I am often in the grounds very early.”

Rachel went off promptly, and Frances

thought over the affair. This had come so suddenly that it set her brain in a whirl : and she was very thankful for the assistance of her trusty and courageous handmaiden. When she saw Hugh she would know why he had come to Carey Farm : but to see him to-night would be unwise, and she must wait till morning for satisfaction. There was something very strange about it : what could have happened ? She formed all manner of impossible conjectures while waiting for Rachel's return.

"There's the key, miss," says Rachel, when she came back. "It's not much use, I suppose, for, if Mr. Hugh could get through stone walls a yard thick, our loft won't hold him. He sent you his love, miss : and he sat down on the straw, while I held the lantern, and ate a lot of bread and beef and drank some of the old ale (Master Walter's ale, miss), and enjoyed it. Then he lay

down on the straw between the two partitions as snug as a bug in a rug, and said, 'Tell Miss Carey I shall be listening for her footstep long before five o'clock.' "

"Nobody saw you, Rachel, I hope?"

"La, miss, they were gone to bed in the kitchen before I came in the first time. It's nigh on twelve o'clock."

Frances did not sleep that night so well as she had anticipated and intended. Hugh Roland was on her mind; sleeping on straw in her own special loft; she his warder, holding the key of his prison. She had one of those perturbed nights which are frequent with possessors of the imaginative faculty—a chequered night, with snatches of sleep and waking intervals. Awake, she speculated vainly: asleep, she dreamt absurdly. She was not greatly refreshed when morning came.

But, whatever night may have been, the



air of dawn was always a delicious stimulant to Frances Carey. She descended into the dim garden and met the cool fresh air. The stars were slowly fading into the grey blue: slight touches of light in the eastern sky seemed like torches held by the stablemen who harness the steeds of Helios. The Autumn flowers that frost had spared welcomed her with a pleasant perfume.

Frances climbed the steps of the loft, unlocked the door, and walked (it was dusk of the morning) right into Hugh Roland's arms. Let us give them two minutes for a happy embrace. Then Frances locked the loft door, sat on a bench which she used when doing her amateur carpentry, and said,

"Well, Mr. Roland, why are you here?"

She had some difficulty in enunciating these few words with her perfect accuracy, for he had squeezed her with what a maiden

of more delicate mould might deem cruel tightness. But Frances, who came of a strong line, and had lived out of doors, did not faint easily.

"It is too bad of you to call me Mr. Roland?" he said, "for you know I don't want to call you Miss Carey. Why am I here? No doubt Shirley has told you all that I have been doing."

"O, yes, I read your letter."

"Well, I saw your brother and Heath (I am quite certain Lyon is Heath) at the Bagatelle Theatre, and tried to get at them, but could not, for the crowd. Walter is very quick: he must have seen me too, for as I was walking home by the quietest streets I could find, not wishing to be discovered, I noticed that I was followed. There was somebody behind me, moving at my own pace. It flashed on my mind there was a detective on my track. I was in a

square—I think it was Golden Square—and there seemed nobody about : so I suddenly turned on the man, who was a couple of yards behind me on the pavement, and caught him by the collar, and said, ‘What the devil do you mean by following me?’ He was a strong fellow : he cried out : ‘Hugh Roland, *alias* George Brown, I arrest you in Her Majesty’s——’ but before he could get any further, I lifted him over the iron railings close by, and dropped him into the area, and ran as hard as I could, till I saw a hansom—I hailed it, and drove to Highgate, and a tremendous fare the fellow charged me. Then I started to walk to Avonside, my idea being to see you, and wait for news from Shirley. I got along very well, for I had a lift of nearly thirty miles on a break belonging to a Duke—I quite forget which. If he is as clever a fellow as the man who looks after his stables,

he must make a figure in Parliament. That is all, my dear Frances, so far as I can recollect: I thought that as they were on my track I had better get out of the way: and I knew no place from which I could safely communicate with our good friend Shirley, unless you would take me in."

"What *am* I to do with you?" asked Frances, laughing. "Do you propose to live in this loft till you have cleared your own character and ruined mine? What will the censorious world say if I keep a young gentleman under lock and key in a pigeon-loft? If you have made up your mind to remain here, I shall hand you over to Rachel, and, if her character is compromised, you, of course, will have to marry her."

"Thank you," said Hugh Roland, "but I have always the choice of returning to the Asylum. Now, dear Frances, let us be seri-

ous. I want to stay here ; I shall sleep better on straw than ever I slept on feathers, when I remember how near you are to me. Write to Shirley, whose letters always reach him at the Travellers' Club, Pall Mall, and tell him what I have done, and where I am, and entreat him not to lose sight of the Honourable Hercules Lyon. If I can be brought face to face with that mean scoundrel, I will expose him at once. But, if I were caught and sent back to the Asylum, Heath would probably take the opportunity of getting out of the way altogether, and I should never be able to come forward, clear of all accusation or suspicion, and resume my place in the world, and ask you the question which I want to ask. So, if you will let me, I will lie on the straw in this dim loft of yours . . . and do you write to Shirley all I have told you."

"How terribly dull you will find it!"  
*said Frances.*

"O, no," said Hugh Roland. "This is your workshop: my being hidden round this corner will not prevent your coming up to look after your little affairs. I shall hear you sing as you choose your hyacinth bulbs for next year; and remembering how those brown bulbs change into lovely spikes of fragrant flower, I shall hope for the same good luck for you and me. We shall have our bloom in time; just now we are a couple of bulbs."

"But you will get no exercise," said Frances. "It will make you ill."

"I have thought of that," said Hugh. "Let me have the key of the door at night, then I'll take a good run when all the world is gone to bed. Will that do? In the morning I will unlock the door early."

They chatted for a long time, and talked a world of nonsense. At last Frances had to go in to breakfast, and confessed that she was very hungry.

"I shall imagine you, with your fresh eggs and crisp bacon and well-made coffee. I wonder if Rachel will give me any breakfast? She mustn't come forward and backward too often," he said.

"Good-bye," said Frances. "I'll tell Rachel what you say. I shall be looking over my hyacinth bulbs in the course of the morning."

Away she went, locking Hugh into the loft. He watched her easy tread toward the house, and wondered for the millionth time how any other woman could be thought beautiful.

She found awaiting her a telegram from her brother,

"Dinner at eight. Heath and Lavington and two American gentlemen. Let everything be first-rate."

## CHAPTER III.

## THE ADVENTURERS.

“Conturbabantur Noveboricopolitani.”

WHY were two American gentlemen going down to Avonside in this sudden and unanticipated fashion? To answer this question we must listen to the confidential talk of the Honourable Hercules Lyon and Major Washington F. Butts. It occurred in the former gentleman's bed-chamber at the Colossus; the time was eleven in the morning, and this republican aristocrat had not yet prepared himself for



appearing in society. The previous night had been one of dissipation : Hercules Lyon, with dimmed eyes, flushed face, aching head, had been vainly trying to recover himself in the usual way, as was shown by a half-empty bottle of brandy on his table, and several empty bottles of soda on the floor. He was just in the mood to succumb to a hostile attack.

The Major was quite prepared to attack him. Things were going badly with the Confederacy. The Honourable Hercules did nothing : though he declared that he was to marry the heiress, he gave no proof of it ; and he showed a ridiculous reluctance to open negotiations with Captain Heath, some of whose surplus money the Major wanted to handle. Lyon seemed to shun the Captain, and was not half as familiar with Walter Carey as the Major wanted him to be. The redoubtable Butts was

angry. He was also alarmed on another score.

Now, when Heath ran up to town for a night, he naturally went to the Bagatelle, and there he met Lavington and Carey and the two Americans. In the course of conversation the Captain delivered to Carey his sister's message, whereon the latter said :

“ O, I'll go down with you to-morrow. I want a few days at home. Suppose you were to come with us, Lavington. Mine's a quaint homely old place, but there are plenty of beds at any rate, and my old governor left some pretty fair wine.”

“ By Jove! he did,” said Heath. “ I never tasted better claret.”

It naturally occurred that the invitation was extended to the two Americans, who accepted it. Hence the telegram.

The night need not be described. It was

arranged that they should all meet at the terminus. Major Washington F. Butts had begun to suspect his younger ally of slipperiness, so he resolved to look after him carefully. He thought a little business might be done down at Avonside, when Carey and Heath and Lavington were unsuspectingly easy after dinner. And he relied on Lyon's aid for a species of plausible fiction which he could not manage himself. So he entered his room, with the advertisement sheet of the *Times* in his hand, and found him in the condition already described. Moreover, Lyon was in a mood half sulky and half savage, and began by swearing that he would not go down to Avonside. What was the use? They could do business with Carey and Heath in town any day. He wasn't going to waste time in a dull country village.

"None of your shirking, Lyon," said the

Major. "I've spent a lot of money on you, and you've got to do your share of the contract. You've done nothing yet. Where's that girl you were going to marry? We don't hear much about her, it seems to me."

"I want to go down and see her," said Lyon. "She is expecting me, and wonders I don't come. Hadn't I better take the opportunity of going there while you are at Carey's place?"

"No; I want you at Carey's, and it is all in the way. You can go there after. But I must see if I can't draw some of these fellows, for things are growing serious. Look here."

He handed Lyon the advertisement sheet of the *Times*, pointing with his finger to a particular announcement in the second column, which ran thus:

"ONE HUNDRED POUNDS REWARD.


"This reward will be given to any one

who can furnish information that will lead to the apprehension of a tall thin elderly woman, in a respectable dress, who is issuing forged notes of the Bank of England. The public are warned against these notes, which are remarkably good forgeries. Apply to Messrs. Hurst and Waldingham, South Square, Gray's Inn."

"What does this mean?" said Lyon, turning pale.

"It means that we had better get out of England as fast as we can; and we can't do it without better money than Susanetta's notes—though they're the best of the sort ever done."

Yes, it was an undeniable fact that the eloquent Susanetta, the chief light of the Free Maidens, was an adroit and dexterous forger, and carried on her business at the offices of that important association which she founded. There, with singular skill,



she produced bank-notes so admirably manufactured that even the Bank itself was occasionally puzzled. A very large number of them got into circulation. It is sad to think that Miss Aspasia, the great leader of the Free Matrons, was in the habit of passing these notes. She would go into a shop, purchase a pair of gloves, a bottle of scent, or some such trifle, tender a forged note in payment, and receive the change. So often had this been done that the limit seemed to have been reached: London tradesmen thought twice before changing Bank of England notes for strangers: and the peculiar personal appearance of Miss Aspasia was known to the police.

“What is to be done?” said Lyon, in a terrified whisper. “I knew those forged notes would get us into trouble.”

“You could not have lived without them,” said the Major, coolly. “Don’t be a

coward. I have sent the women off to Brighton this morning, till further orders. You will come to Avonside with the rest of us, and there we'll see what can be done. If I can get money down for some of my gold bonds, we'll vamoos at once, and find our way to some place out of the regular track till this affair is blown over. If I can't, we must make ourselves scarce for a time at any rate."

"What about the women, then?" said the Honourable Hercules Lyon.

"We can leave them to their own devices: they're both pretty 'cute, and they've got some good money, as well as bogus notes. Don't trouble about them; we've our own skins to save. Now I suppose you'll come on, without any nonsense."

Lyon sulkily assented. He was frightened. Some of Susanetta's forged notes had passed through his hands, and he knew the

facility with which sins against finance are traced in London. The state of affairs appalled him; he knew not what to do; he surrendered himself entirely to the guidance of the older and tougher villain, Major Washington F. Butts. He had no desire to go to Avonside, but it seemed better than remaining in London. The excesses of the previous night had left him with a depression which no amount of stimulant seemed able to remove: and Major Washington F. Butts, who took everything with complete calmness, could not help regarding with some contempt a young fellow so easily knocked over.

“You’re a disgrace to your sex, Lyon,” said the Major. “Why the devil don’t you burst into a flood of tears, like a girl in a sentimental story? If you can’t wake up, and be of some use, I shall just go quietly



off without you, and leave you to your own fate."

This threat frightened the Honourable Hercules Lyon into subservience to the Major's will: and he prepared for his journey to Avonside in a reluctant spiritless way. In the midst of their conversation there was a tap at the door, and a waiter handed in a card with the name of Mr. Gabriel Shirley upon it, and said the gentleman would be glad to speak to Mr. Lyon for a few minutes.

"Tell him," said the Major, promptly, "that Mr. Lyon is not well this morning, and ask if he can either send up a message or call again in the afternoon."

"It is that man who dined here with the Italian," said Butts, when the waiter was gone.

"O yes: and he was at Southpool afterwards with Sir Charles Wray's party."

"What business can he have with you?"

"None that I can imagine. At any rate, you gave the right message. It is dangerous to see anybody just now."


Poor Lyon was in a thorough state of terror. His Mephistopheles, the Major, made him do just what he pleased: the very last thing he would have chosen he was now about to do—namely, to go to Avonside in the company of Captain Heath and Walter Carey. He had a strong aversion both from Avonside and his fellow-travellers. Could he have had his way he would have walked on board a foreign steamer at London Bridge, and put the sea between himself and England—between himself and all those forged notes which Miss Aspasia had sown broadcast amid the shops of London. But he was obliged to get into his first-class carriage and join in the humour of the party, so far as might be. All the party showed exuberant hilarity, and perhaps the gayest.

of all was Major Washington F. Butts, who had an immense number of forged notes on his mind, and rather a heavy bundle of them in his pocket. He was full of absurd American anecdote, and made dry remarks, and seemed not in the least troubled by the thought that at any station a policeman might clap his hand on his shoulder. Major Washington F. Butts had passed through worse perils; he had been lynched by a Vigilance Committee, and just escaped hanging; he had been cowhided by a lady—ladies always do that sort of thing thoroughly in America; he looked on anything that could happen to him in England as tame when compared with his previous experiences.

Walter Carey too seemed in high spirits, though he was excessively annoyed that Hugh Roland had not yet been secured. The detectives he employed told him a lot

of plausible stories; according to their account, poor Hugh could not escape them; but Carey was impatient, and grew very weary of all this delay. He had made up his mind that he would find Roland, and felt sure that his determined perseverance would succeed. With this feeling, he regretted that he had been induced to leave London for even a day.

Perhaps the most brilliant member of the party was Lavington, who rattled away in a superb style, and kept everybody so lively that they reached Chessington station before they fancied themselves half way. Had he not good reason to be merry? He had heard that very morning that he would probably lose his seat at the next election, as an influential Tory was coming forward; that Mr. Molloy, one of the Directors of the Irish Land Company, had gone abroad for a holiday, taking with him all the available



balance; that the Bagatelle could not be kept open another week without ten thousand pounds; and that Miss Ethel Clinton had accepted proposals of a certain sort from that eloquent and erotic gentleman, Mr. Serjeant Bellasys. Lavington, having had all this interesting information, whistled a "Begone, dull Care!" as he got into his brougham to drive to the railway.

As to Captain Heath, he was more sincerely happy than any one else, for a brilliant idea had occurred to him. It concerned Frances Carey. The more he thought of her, the more it struck him that she was a girl of the right sort. What a capital dinner she gave him! How well she talked! How admirably she played cards! She wasn't a mere chit, that ought to be in short frocks; she was a sensible woman, who wouldn't care for boys, but would see the value of a man of the world, in the prime of life, like

himself. Why shouldn't he marry her? They would suit each other perfectly, he could see. The Captain grew sanguine about it; and when they were driving over from Chessington, was picturing to himself quite an affectionate reception from Frances. Surely the idea that had struck him must have struck her. Captain Heath, did not, to do him justice, belong to the class of elderly gentlemen described by Homer . . .  
*ὧν οὐραὶ μὲν ἀπήμβλυνται, θυμὸς δὲ μενοινᾷ* . . .  
he was above all things a man of the world; and he looked on marriage as an arrangement. What occurred to him in reference to Frances was that she seemed a woman of the world. Though only twenty-five, she might have been ten years older, so far as mental maturity is concerned. Her father had taught her so much. He, a London surgeon of the first force, had a thorough knowledge of men, women, and books. Had


his son Walter been of his own temperament, he would have made him a great man ; but Mr. Carey was a keen judge of character, and saw clearly that Walter was not designed to be scholar or statesman, but that his happiest destiny would be that of a country gentleman. Mr. Carey's judgment of his children formed a rare exception to that well-known rule . . . a prophet is unhonoured among his own kin, and in his own house ; a rule recently expanded with his usual felicity by Mr. Disraeli in his inaugural speech as Lord Rector of Glasgow University. He told the students, in his advice to them as to forming an early and accurate estimate of their own characters, that

“ Perception of character is always a rare gift, but around the domestic hearth it is almost unknown. Every one is acquainted with the erroneous estimates of their offspring which have been made even by illustrious parents. The silent, but perhaps pensive, boy

is looked upon as a dullard, while the flippancy of youth in a commonplace character is interpreted into a dangerous vivacity which may in time astonish, perhaps even alarm, the world."

Mr. Carey had clearer insight; he saw in Walter a strong resolute well-balanced mind, content with stout and serviceable work; he saw in Frances a touch of something higher, a subtlety of thought, a capacity to enjoy the choicest work of the highest mind, and to draw deep delight from the inexhaustible beauty of nature. So Walter was his companion over Carey Farm, when the talk was of bullocks and wheat, while Frances was his companion in the library, in a boat on Avon, in long Summer walks over green meadows and through silent shadowy woods. And so she had grown into a companionable creature, *bon camarade*, a quiet humour mingled with her tender gravity.

"Quite a shame," thought Captain Heath,





“that such a fine girl should throw herself away on a boy. She would suit me perfectly—and I suppose she’ll have some money.”

Mr. Gabriel Shirley, who had made an attempt to see Hercules Lyon and failed, came again to the Colossus in the afternoon, only to learn that he and the Major had left town for a few days. Determined not to lose the scent, he asked to see the manager. “The General” appeared . . . a portly gentleman, who had seen service in the Confederate War, and had since edited a newspaper, directed a railway, and been Principal of a Ladies’ College . . . but who seemed quite in his element at the Colossus. He showed Mr. Shirley to his private room, and asked what he could do for him with a rough and ready politeness.

“Can you give me any information in reference to an American gentleman who is staying here—the Honourable Hercules

Lyon? I don't want any betrayal of confidence."

The General, a humorous man in his way, saw that Mr. Shirley was humorous also. There is a freemasonry among humourists, which beats all the signs of the masonic craft. Mr. Shirley saw, by a twinkle in the General's eye, a movement of his lip, that he did not think very much of Hercules Lyon.

"The Honourable Hercules Lyon," he said, "may be a very big man. His friends say he is. I don't know. Major Washington F. Butts says he is; and people in New York say the Major is the most truthful man they know, because he is so quick with his revolver."


"Then you can't give me any definite information about Mr. Lyon?"

"Not a bit. I never heard of him before. Butts I have heard of, and not much to his

credit. The States turn out a few adventurers, you know ; and when they want to make a fuss in the world they naturally go to the biggest hotels. We can't refuse them, unless we know something decided against them. Butts is shady, that I know, and so are the two women ; and, as birds of a feather flock together, I shouldn't much care to endorse a bill of Lyon's."

"I am very much obliged to you," said Gabriel Shirley. "I want to see this Mr. Lyon, but I hear he has just gone into the country. If he should return, or if he should send his address, would you kindly telegraph to me ? It is really a matter of importance."

"I'll telegraph with pleasure," said the General. "They won't be long away ; they have too much business to do in London. And now that our business is over, come to the bar and take a drink."



This Mr. Shirley declined; and, having left his address with the General, he went again to Hugh Roland's Hotel.


Finding no news of him there, he left a note for him, and walked slowly away in a disappointed mood. Certainly it was very provoking that an imbroglio so easy to settle should continue simply because two or three people could not be brought together. And he began to be afraid about Hugh Roland. Cautious inquiries which he made at Scotland Yard, where he knew some of the chief functionaries, satisfied him that Hugh had not fallen into the hands of the police; and this made him only the more anxious, since he feared that something worse might have happened. If Hugh, in his eagerness, had got into any difficulty with persons of the dangerous class, the result could not be foreseen. It would be far better for him to be taken by the police,

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seeing that his liberation could not be far distant—unless both he and Frances were mistaken about Lyon, which seemed almost impossible.

It cannot be denied that Mr. Shirley was in a very fidgety state. He had so thoroughly made up his mind that, if Roland and Lyon were brought together, the whole affair would be cleared up at once, that it annoyed him excessively when neither of them could be found. However, he was more patient than most men. He saw that nothing could be done at the moment. He resolved to wait another day: so, having eaten an old-fashioned wholesome dinner at the Cock, he went to see Charles Mathews; and the perfect acting of that inimitable comedian refreshed his mind, and caused him to forget his annoyances.

“A good play,” Mr. Shirley was wont to remark, “is the most perfect refreshment to



the brain. I prefer it even to fine music. An opera stimulates me too much; the airs haunt me, sleeping and awake; the lyric frenzy is fatal to tranquillity. But I like a comedy—poetic or genteel . . . *As you like it*, or *Used up* . . . something not too absorbing, not too laughable. Good tragedy tires the nerves with passion: good farce wearies one with laughter; but the enjoyment obtained from comedy is of a quieter kind, and does not fatigue you any more than looking at a beautiful woman or a lovely landscape.”

Acting on this theory, Gabriel Shirley spent his evening in the pleasant company of Charles Mathews, and went to bed directly after the theatre and slept soundly. He awoke in better spirits, with a pleasant presentiment of good fortune—which, however, was not to happen until next day.

## CHAPTER IV.

## IDYLLIC HOURS.

"One time there is, one only time,  
     'Twixt birth and death, from sorrow free,  
 "And that, O lady of my rhyme!  
                     I passed with thee."

COUNT CASSIUS GRIMANI, who, in  
 his early days, had been the most  
 restless of men, wandering heaven knows  
 whither in quest of heaven knows what, had  
 begun to enjoy the flavour of serene repose.  
 The atmosphere of Monckton Manor was  
 favourable to this. Sir Charles was a  
 dreamer amid books and pictures: Cecilia  
 was a dreamer amid birds and flowers,

music and song. Cecilia was half a bird herself, and half a flower. Her pretty girl-face, its hazel eyes touched with specks of light, its coralline mouth meant solely for kisses and song, was just like a fair [fresh flower. She spoke in music. She sang deliciously, without effort. Her notes were pure silver, easy and sweet.

“The first voice of Italy ever born in England,” said Count Cassius.

He had found his fate. There are girls who seem very simple children indeed, and who go to the end of their lives with nothing to distinguish them from others except this beautiful simplicity—unless they meet with the very man who is qualified to develop and mature the soul that lies dormant within them. Cecilia was one of these. If she had not met Count Cassius she would never have grown to the full beauty of her womanhood: no other man in



the world could have had the same influence. Her sensitive and fluent nature was shown by the effect which Hercules Lyon produced upon her mind : but his fascination had a kind of terror in it, and she felt in his presence something like a bird on which a serpent has fixed its evil eye. Again, she felt the influence of Frances, which tranquillized her : to a girl of this type, the companionship of a stronger and calmer character is an immeasurable advantage. Cecilia was a spiritual creature, whose moral and intellectual faculties were subordinate to the pure and beautiful soul. Hence Frances, whose conscience was vigorous and whose intellect was clear, was the very friend she required. They became intimate by instinct. Cecilia needed Frances, and Frances knew that she was needed.


What Count Cassius Grimani first saw in Cecilia was her unique and simple beauty

—the beauty of an unawakening spirit—the beauty of a lovely flower. What next he perceived was the music that seemed to exhale from her, like fragrance from a flower. It was not merely that her slender white fingers were at home on the piano's keys, or that she sang like a bird because she couldn't help it; but her speech had a natural melody, her movement a natural rhythm. Her laugh was like the ripple of water; she danced over the lawn like the motacilla.

These things attracted Count Cassius, poet, and therefore student of the sex. He had seen no one like her. His lost Lucia was simple: but there was a fiery touch in her character, a resolute self-will. And though, like most Italian girls, she was musical, and sang with a clear throat, she was not embodied music—music enshrined in a beautiful human form like Cecilia.

Song was Cecilia's natural language ; when the Count heard her speak, he felt it conceivable that there is somewhere an orb which has no language except music.

They became, as we have seen, tutor and pupil. They sang and played together all through the golden October hours. Sir Charles was glad to see his daughter amused so innocently : perhaps he sometimes wondered that the Count did not get tired of his occupation : but a man of absent mind, buried in his own fancies, is apt to take little note of what other people do. That Cecilia could fall in love, or imagine herself of a marriageable age, was a notion that could not occur to him ; but had it done so, he would have felt quite satisfied. No one who had once seen Count Cassius could doubt that he was a gentleman in the highest sense ; worthy, therefore, to be



trusted with that most precious of all mortal possessions, a lady's love.

It gradually dawned upon Count Cassius that Cecilia was something more than a musical child; that under his influence she was growing into spiritual womanhood, as the bud becomes the rose when touched by sunshine. The thought delighted him. He felt as some prae-Homeric Greek may have felt, standing on an island and gazing on a foam-crested wave—the sapphire lymph snow-tipped, and rose-flushed by the dawn—when lo it was a wave no longer, but a white wonder of female beauty . . . the Foam-Goddess herself, with all the future passion of the world in her deep luminous eyes. Their constant discourse was music: but music grew to have its meaning; and there was no tone of voice and instrument which did not soon become significant between Cassius and Cecilia.

He made song for her. He made melody for her. Here is a duet between Orlando and Rosalind : Cecilia had read no Shakespeare, but the Count told her the story of *As you like it*, using often the poet's very words :

“ ORLANDO.

I went into the forest far,  
Where the sun is like a star  
The mighty branches hide it so :  
I met a saucy boy who played  
At love as if he were a maid.  
You were not there, O no ! O no !

“ ROSALIND.

Strange creatures, I have heard folks tell,  
Haunt the lonely forest dell,  
And through the shuddering copses go :  
But did we meet there, I and you ?  
But did I say what was not true ?  
I'm not a saucy boy, I know.”

“ A very saucy girl, I think,” said Cecilia, when she had sung her song. “ You have told me many stories of Shakespeare, Cassius ” . . . yes, it had come to dropping the

Count . . . "how often he makes girls dress like men! I can't fancy doing that. What was his reason? There is Rosalind in the forest; and the one that professed to be a lawyer; and another in that Verona story—O, and another in that delightful play where the steward fancies his mistress in love with him. Of course Shakespeare knows, since you say he is the wisest of men; but I don't think anything would induce me to dress up in that way."

"You would look as if you had run away from an infant school," said Count Grimani. "That sort of disguise was a favourite incident in our Italian romances, from which Shakespeare took most of his comedies; and besides, it was an easy way of showing that some women have as much courage and common sense as men."

"I am very glad I haven't," said Cecilia. "I have heard girls say they were sorry not

to be men: I can't understand it. If I weren't a girl, I should like to be a bird or a flower: but a man . . . no!"

"Do you dislike us so much?" asked the Count.

"No: I like you so much," was the simple answer. "But if I were one of you I should not like you. Besides, don't you see, Cassius," she said, with wise gravity, laying down the law with her dimpled forefinger, "it is just as if a diamond ring wanted to be a sword—as if water wanted to be fire—as if a lily wanted to be an oak? I wouldn't be anything but what I am for all the world—indeed I know I couldn't."

Count Cassius thought that this mere child spoke very wisely. There are women in these days who would like to act as if they were men: and there are also men who do act very much as if they were women: and I hold that both classes are people without

spiritual sex. Now Cecilia Wray was an absolute woman, and rejoiced therein.

On these happy afternoons Cassius and Cecilia talked much in song. Here is the Count in a humorous mood :

“ O I have wandered north and south,  
And paid full many a visit,  
And never saw a pretty mouth  
But that I longed to kiss it.”  
The ladies heard this boaster’s lay,  
And turned their scornful heads away.


“ O I have wandered north and south,  
And traversed forests lonely,  
In quest of one ripe rosy mouth,  
Mine at first sight, mine only.”  
A lady saw his bright eyes shine,  
And said, “ ’Tis mine . . . and he is mine.”

Cassius never made love to Cecilia—nor indeed Cecilia to Cassius. But they talked about love, philosophically ; and, as we have seen, they sang about love. And perhaps they both understood, without word uttered, that there was true love between



them. Straight flies the bee to the flower's heart in search of honey. To Count Cassius it seemed that to talk of love to Cecilia was mere surplusage. Some day he would take her in his arms and kiss her ; he had never kissed her yet. She was not to be touched too roughly, to be wooed too abruptly. Besides, every day of her life she seemed to grow more beautifully toward womanhood : and he was too delighted in watching this wonderful change to say a word or give a look that might startle her into the semblance of Horace's Chloë *hinnuleo similis*.

Happy days these, for the poetic Italian : happy days also for Cecilia. Whenever he talked of going, Sir Charles pressed him to stay, and he needed no eloquence to persuade him thereto. Indeed he felt as if it would be difficult to tear himself away . . . when the time should come, as the time



must. At least . . . well : to Cecilia no word at all, but a kiss, and to Sir Charles a very few words indeed, and then they two would never part again. But he was in no hurry. This little Cecilia—this delicious young rosebud slowly opening and exhaling its fragrance under the sunshine of love—was so sweet a sight. He paused before touching the delicate bloom on those fair petals. Let us justify him by one other song that he sang :

“ O why do I delay ?

Why does the wind delay to strike the sea,  
Making innumerable sails fly free  
Upon their homeward way ?

“ O why do I delay ?

Why does the nightingale delay its nest,  
Singing in boughs just crimsoned by the west,  
Till sunset skies turn gray ?

“ O why do I delay ?

Why does the sun delay his golden light,  
Though the mysterious hours of happier night  
Succeed the happy day ?”

Of nights, after dinner, Cecilia was wont—having perchance sung a song or two—to kiss Papa and go to bed early. She liked going to bed early. She had no desire to assert precocious womanhood. She was a child yet, and was content to be a child. And when she was gone, the General and the Count used to get into pleasant conversation, often lasting till late into the night. Between them there was very much in common. Both were lovers of art and of books. Both, in their way, were lovers of adventure. The General had seen service and done daring deeds at desperate moments: Count Cassius had in his wide travel run risks quite equal to any that occur in war. They exchanged fragments of experience, and got on capitally together. Long past midnight it commonly was when they separated: and then Count Cassius would sit down and write a song for Cecilia before

he went to bed. His was a restless spirit, despising sleep. His slumber was seldom profound, though always brief. Coleridge's stigma on a man who dreamed no dreams—that therefore he could have no poetry in him—was wholly inapplicable to Count Grimani, who was a regular wayfarer in Dreamland. It was indeed his faith that dreams are divine: that faith he found in the most ancient books of all nations, in the *Iliad* as in *Genesis*.

“We abdicate some of our chief faculties,” he was wont to say, “by listening to the voice of pure reason only. Reason is but one of the many spiritual powers which in combination make what we call the mind of man. There is conscience; there is imagination; there is instinct. The pure reasoner silences his conscience, ignores imagination, loses instinct altogether. Our various faculties should be harmoniously developed.

What is sleep? It is merely a pause of rest for the material part of man. The immortal spirit cannot sleep. It remains calm in its retreat, like the halcyon on the tranquil ocean. This is the very time when, undiverted by outer things, with all the senses shut, and all the delicate apparatus of thought at perfect rest, the spirit can receive and retain a message from the Divinity."

Cecilia was wont to listen wonderingly to these ontological lectures of the Count's, just as a few years before she had listened, with eyes wide open, to the marvellous stories of ghosts, goblins, and giants which her old nurse was never tired of relating.

"But, Cassius," she urged, "when old Betty told me a tale of a giant that came out of the sea one Sunday morning, and put the parish-church with all the congregation into his pocket as a toy for his little daughter, I used to dream about that. I used to

fancy I was in the big square pew in the gallery, with Papa leaning back and not hearing a word of the sermon, and the parson prosing away in the same tone and saying the same things over again every Sunday: and then all at once came a shake like an earthquake, and the church grew dark (in the giant's pocket, you know), and suddenly it was set upright on a table in the giant's daughter's nursery, in an immense palace under the sea. And the wretch's hand came in at the church-door, as big as an elephant—and of course she took *me* out of my pew, though I screamed and fought—and I saw her great mouth like a red cavern, with teeth like tombstones—and just as I thought she would swallow me I awoke. That is the sort of dream I used to have . . . and I did not like it."

Count Cassius laughed.

"That is not a true dream. Your old


nurse had frightened you, and you had eaten too much supper."

"O, Cassius! As if I ever did such a thing! There was only one thing I ever cared for at supper-time, and that was a baked potato with plenty of butter in it. I am sure that is not unwholesome."

"I should be very sorry to try it," he said. "The potato is not a tuber that I admire: and I wonder people who eat it every day can have any poetry left in them. It was not generally known in Shakespeare's time, or he could not have painted Rosalind."

"What nonsense!" she cried. "As if what people eat and drink had anything to do with their brains."

"The Esquimaux, who live on the fat of whales, have never produced an Ariosto. That required grapes and melons and sunshine."



"Sunshine !" she cried, clapping her hands : " now that is the end of it all. Where the sun can ripen grapes it can ripen poets."

"Then you give up Shakespeare and Milton?" he said.

"No : for did not you tell me they had both been in Italy? I only know what you tell me about them. I never could read : it is tiresome. I don't think one's eyes were made to pore over printed books. I like to look at the sky and the grass and the water ; if I am to know any poetry, somebody must say or sing it to me. What a pity wandering troubadours don't come round now, as you say they used to do, and bring a new poem every time. Instead of this, there is that dreary *Times*, which everybody thinks it necessary to read right through, from beginning to end. And as if that was not enough, there are some dreadful people



who insist on telling you what is in it—all about kings and emperors one knows nothing about, or railway accidents, or people who break all the Commandments, or, worst of all, somebody called Gladstone, who appears to be always doing such wicked things that I wonder he has not been hanged long ago. If one gets nothing better than all that by reading newspapers, I am sure I would much rather never see one.”

“I am quite of your opinion,” said Count Cassius : and he thought, moreover, what a delight it would be to take Cecilia to one of his Italian villas, and forbid all letters and journals, and forget the world.

## CHAPTER V.

## HYACINTH BULBS.


"Immortal gardens of the island King,  
 Set in bright æther of the Odyssey,  
 With bloom and fruitage on the self-same tree,  
 Scaturient fountains always murmuring  
 Through odorous cyclamen and hyacinth,  
 While roses flush around the marble palace-plinth."

WALTER CAREY'S telegram startled  
 Frances. It was so unlike her brother's usual practice to fill the house with guests at so short a notice ; but certainly Walter was greatly changed since his acquaintance with Lavington had taken him so much to London. But this was a trifle ;

the resources of Carey Farm were considerable, and there were good tradesmen at Chessington. What startled her most was the mention of two American gentlemen. It took her breath away. They could scarcely be anyone except Hercules Lyon and his strange companion. And Hugh Roland was here to meet and expose this man, and thus recover his place in society. It was a delightful thought. She could scarcely contain herself while she gave Rachel the necessary directions about dinner and bed.

"It's very ill-considerate of Mr. Walter to give you all this trouble so sudden, Miss Frances. But the men are poor creatures; they expect to get fish out of the well, and think pheasants grow on apple-trees. I hope you found Mr. Roland comfortable, Miss," she added, in a whisper.

"O yes. He says you mustn't feed him too often, for fear of suspicion. Now you



will see to the dinner, Rachel, won't you? I have a great deal to do."

Frances took her garden-gloves and basket, and walked in her usual way to her workshop. She would have done the very same thing if Hugh had not been there, for she was just on the point of planting hyacinths and tulips and crocuses, and her fresh bulbs had arrived within a day or two. She felt it odd that she could not do with ease to-day what she would have done without a thought yesterday, just because she was conscious of Hugh in hiding there. However, she tripped up the steps, and unlocked the door, and was in her lover's presence. When the door closed behind her, they could not see each other very well. The loft had two windows, a skylight and a small casement looking over the farmyard; and as they were never cleaned,

the light struggled through them with difficulty.

"So you are come to arrange your bulbs," said Hugh, springing from his couch of straw to welcome her. "I hope they will take a very long time."

"O, indeed they won't. Now don't be troublesome, Hugh; I have something tremendously important to tell you. Walter has just telegraphed to say that he is going to bring four people down to dinner—Lavington, Captain Heath, and two American gentlemen. Those American gentlemen must be Lyon and his friend."

"I see it! I see it!" cried Hugh. "This is glorious. What time do they come? I must be there to meet them. How lucky I came down!"

"Don't be so excited, Hugh. You really must not rush out upon them first thing. Mr. Shirley ought to be here: I am quite

sure he would say so if we could ask him. Besides, suppose this man should not be Heath after all."

"NOT! I know he is. I can't wait for Shirley. He will be a year coming. He is a good old boy, but terribly slow."

"You *must* wait, Hugh. I shall quarrel with you if you don't consent. You say you know it is Heath: but how is it his father does not recognise him?"

"Perhaps he does," said Hugh.

"Well, my brother, then. He is sharp, you know. He found you out easily enough. How can this man contrive to deceive him?"

"My dearest Frances, I don't know," said Hugh, impatiently. "I only know he is the scoundrel who did his best to get me hanged, just that he might get out of the country and escape paying his debts. He is as bad as a murderer. He shall not escape me now."

"Hugh, Hugh, don't be so fierce. If this had never happened, we might never have known how much we love each other. Come, be a good boy, and do the first thing I have ever asked you. Mr. Shirley will be sure to come down the moment he gets my letter."

"Well, I suppose you must have your way," said Hugh Roland, with great reluctance. "But think, Frances, what it is to have my mortal enemy within reach, and not to be allowed to go near him. It's too much for flesh and blood : my fist tingles to be at him."

"You'll do nothing of the kind, sir," said Frances. "You'll wait for Mr. Shirley. Come, I will go and write the letter at once, and then I'll return to my bulbs."

When she was gone, Hugh Roland wildly walked up and down the loft, cursing his fate that he could not get at his enemy.

Frances meanwhile, in her own private room, was writing to Mr. Shirley. This was her letter :—

“DEAR MR. SHIRLEY,

“I have such news to tell you. Hugh Roland is here, hidden in a loft: he came last night, for the detectives nearly caught him [in London. And this morning I have a telegram from my brother, that he is coming home to dinner, with Captain Heath, Mr. Lavington, and two *Americans*. These *must* be Lyon and that other man, I suppose: but if Lyon is Heath, as Hugh thinks, and as I think from his writing, would he dare to travel with the Captain and Walter? You know how soon Walter found out Hugh. Dear Cecilia has that wicked letter Lyon wrote to her: I am going to ask her for it, in case it should be of any use.



"Do, *do* come down at once. Hugh is so wild that he wants to fly at Lyon the moment he enters the house. I have such hard work to quiet him: but he has promised to wait till you come: and I think he will keep his promise if you come very soon.

"F. C."

Having written this letter, and a note to Cecilia, and gone through various parts of the establishment to see that the preparations for her visitors were in fair progress, Frances thought she might go on sorting her bulbs. Never I think did any lady find hyacinths so intractable. Some mischievous imps seem to have affected the bulbs: they would not be sorted. Perhaps the presence of Hugh Roland had something to do with it.

"How I always admired your hyacinths, Frances! Such lovely circles of colour on

the lawn ; and when the south wind blew I could smell them half a mile off as I came across the valley. Will they be as beautiful next Spring, I wonder? We shall look at them together then, and remember this morning in the loft."


"How do you know we shall look at them together?" she asked. "You seem to see a long way forward. There may be an ocean between us by that time."

"An ocean of love," he said. "To that I have no objection, for it can be packed into a space as small as a lady's heart."

Thus they blew bubbles gaily, and awaited events. Frances was nervous ; she could not help dwelling on the possibility that their toil might be in vain—that after all Stephen Heath might not be identical with Hercules Lyon. In this case Hugh would be in worse plight than ever. The idea of his being tried again for his life, which in

her ignorance of law she thought might have to happen, made her quite miserable. But Roland cheered her; Roland was as gay and joyous at the thought of coming to a triumphant end of his trouble, as if he had been Roland, peèr of Charlemagne, going forth to put the heathen to flight.

Alas, October afternoons grow dark—so dark the fairest eyes cannot tell a hyacinth from a crocus. Juliet had to leave Romeo in his straw, and dress for dinner, and be civil to his arch-enemy, Tybalt with the yellow hair. So they parted. And by the time our Frances had seen that all was as it should be; that beds were well aired—be sure she put Lyon in the least comfortable room; that cook had made a good sauce for Grantley Berkeley's pintails; that Rachel, who was always butler (and given to be economical) had put enough wine in readiness; there was not much more than twenty



minutes to dress for dinner. Walter had a selfish pride in his sister, as being to some extent his property, and a handsome creditable possession ; and she knew that when he telegraphed—*Let everything be first-rate*—he thought of her as well as of the dinner and wine.


So she dressed, putting on some of her choicest “war-paint,” and arranging autumnal berries and ruddy leaves in her abundant brown hair. And she had hardly got downstairs when she heard wheels on the gravel, and the party arrived. Rachel acted as groom of the chambers, and they all went off to dress, Walter Carey whispering to his sister :

“You look quite charming, Frances. Everybody will be in love with you.”


The notion had got into Walter Carey’s head that Lavington would make a good husband for Frances. Wyldote Lavington,

M.P., with a house in Prince's Gate, and an estate in Bucks, with a theatre, a yacht, a racing stud, a newspaper, and many other possessions, seemed a great man to Walter Carey; it did not occur to him that there was anything hollow in all this. He thought his sister Frances, with all her style and cleverness, would make a capital wife for this brilliant man about town.

At dinner Frances had Hercules Lyon on her left, and Captain Heath on her right; next to the Captain was Major Washington F. Butts, next Lyon was Lavington. It was a gay dinner, well served and merrily eaten. Lavington was quite the most charming of conversers, having an easy brilliancy only attainable by inborn wit, well cultivated by social usage. Captain Heath was chivalrously polite to Frances, so that her opinion of him had been greatly raised by the time dinner was over.




Whenever she had a chance, Frances looked carefully at Hercules Lyon. That distinguished gentleman talked very little, and seemed to eat with a very poor appetite, but she noticed that he drank a great deal. Was he Stephen Heath? She could not decide. There was a general likeness; but there were differences. The yellow hair gave the whole face so different an aspect that she wondered how Hugh Roland could seem so certain. Then the voice differed—it was rough, raspy, choked in the throat; whereas Stephen Heath had a voice that sounded musical in all its intonations—one of those fine natural voices that make their possessors Archbishops and Lord Chief Justices. This puzzled Frances more than anything. She did not of course know anything of the advance of science in the United States, and was unaware that gargles have been invented to alter the voice just as washes change the



colour of the hair. There seems no limit to the inventive power of the Great Republic. The patentee of the *Gargarismus Gloriosus* maintains that the commonest female voice can, by constant doses, be raised to the *timbre* of a Lind or a Patti. Unfortunately all that is advertised concerning patent medicines is not invariably accurate.

“You have a charming place here,” said Lavington to Carey. “I like these snug old-fashioned houses. To my intense disgust, my uncle, from whom I inherit my place in Bucks, pulled down a dear old-fashioned place, with plenty of ghosts and no draughts, that I remember when I was a boy, and built a modern mansion. It is so fine as to be mentioned in Murray’s handbook, but I don’t care if I never see it again. There is a windy picture-gallery full of hideous Paul Potters and Ostades and Tenierses; but there isn’t a cosy bedroom in the house,



or a parlour where you can enjoy a game of whist or a bowl of punch. Now this place of yours, Carey, so far as I have seen it, seems quite in the old style ; massive walls, and snug panelled rooms, and no sacrifice of comfort to show. I suppose it is an old family house."

"Yes," said Walter Carey, "but not of our family. My father bought it from the administrators of estates belonging to people called Kenyon ; the family terminated in the person of an old maid, and the property was cut up small among a number of collateral relations. There are a few old books and pictures here that belonged to the Kenyons ; my sister can show them to you whenever you like ; she knows more of such things than I do."

"I will ask you presently, Miss Carey," said Lavington to Frances, who, though Captain Heath was unusually voluble, caught



fragments of other conversation. "I am rather curious about the Kenyon family, for my mother was a Kenyon."

"There may be no relationship," said Captain Heath. "Kenyon is not an unusual name. I remember the Miss Kenyon who was last of the race here—a tall thin gaunt old lady, who wore a dress much too short for her, and was followed about by a tame raven, like Barnaby Rudge. The people about her thought that bird was a demon. He certainly had a great gift of conversation. When I was a boy, I threw a stone at him once; and he croaked out—'Boy, revere your elders.' After that, I asked Miss Kenyon, who was always very kind to me, how old he was; and she said her father had bought him when he was quite a young man. Now her father was eighty when he died—and at his death Miss Kenyon, who was the youngest of the family and outlived

them all, was certainly not of age. So, if the tradition is correct, that raven was an ancient bird."

"What became of him?" asked Frances.

"That is the oddest part of it. He was never seen after his mistress's death. The villagers, to whom Miss Kenyon had always been generous, declared with characteristic gratitude that he was a devil, and had carried her soul away. The raven vanished: that is certain."

"Ravens are very curious birds," said Major Washington F. Butts, in a voice not altogether unlike a raven's croak. "Old Judge Loughed of our town had a bird that belonged to his grandmother, and his grandmother said she had a certificate saying he was a hundred years old when she bought him, which was about the time she cut her wisdom-teeth. She left him to the Judge, who was her favourite grandson, and luckily

she left him a lot of better property than that, but there was a hundred dollars a year charged on the estate for the raven. Well, the Judge married four times, and people used to call him Bluebeard, and certainly his first three had a hard time of it. But his fourth, who had a little money and a good deal of voice, used to make the Judge wish he hadn't been quite so matrimonial. She used to talk him down worse than he ever talked down any poor criminal, and the old raven used to put his knowing head on one side and say, 'He's not so good a judge as he was.' They say she watched her opportunity, and twisted that raven's neck—but for the credit of human nature I hope it's not true."

"American ravens are always cleverer than English ones," said Lavington; "and I am not sure the superiority is confined to ravens. Everything is on a grand scale

with you, Major, from the rivers and mountains to the numerous devices of humanity. I suppose New York will be bigger than London some day."

"Yes," said Captain Heath, "and San Francisco than New York. That's the city of the future—the city that will connect Asia with America."

"I don't know about that," said Walter Carey. "So far as I can see, the Americans have not yet got many new ideas. How if the old ideas should prove the strongest, after all? I remember my father used to predict a great revolution when China and Japan opened out upon the world. The Chinese are not a great race, but look at their numbers."

"They're a poor lot," said the Major, "but there are a good many of them, and they're uncommon cunning. Any Chinaman I ever saw would take in a Jew. There's

nothing they can't do, if they're shown the way, and they steal beautifully. They've slow consciences and quick fingers."

"A fine race," said Lavington. "We should appreciate them in the City. What a pity they don't find their way to London faster! Our people have exhausted all the best European methods of swindling and forgery; you might bring out a good original Chinese rascality with a joint-stock company, limited. Really, we want something fresh in the way of swindling. The Stock Exchange is slow."

"You are jesting, of course," said Major Washington F. Butts; "but really, Lavington, I don't think we ought to jest on so serious a subject. In all cities there are black sheep, but in a city like London sound finance is the rule, I am sure."

"O, of course," said Walter Carey. "But

I don't see why we should talk finance—do you, Lyon?”

The Honourable Hercules had been very quiet, and Carey thought he would wake him up.

“Certainly not,” he said. “In the presence of a lady, the subject should by no means be mentioned. After all, money is merely a means to an end, and people who are always trying to get a great deal of it become its slaves.”

“By Jove! Lyon,” said Lavington, “you are more philosophical than I ever knew you. It is the bright, fresh atmosphere of Carey Farm that does it, and the happy influence of Miss Carey. If you remained a couple of years in England, it is my belief you would get two uncommonly good things.”

“What are they?” asked Carey. “What do you think our friend wants?”

"Common sense and a good wife. They say neither of those two plants will grow in the States," said Lavington.

"I don't see how you are to get one without the other," said Captain Heath. "It appears to me there is very little common sense among men. If I want true wisdom, I go to a lady for it," he went on, with a half-bow to Frances. "What do you think, Mr. Lyon?"

"My experience of ladies is very small," said that gentleman. "If they are not a great deal wiser than men are, they are very foolish creatures indeed."

"You are a cynic," said the Captain.

"Can these two people," thought Frances, "be father and son? It is absurd. Hugh *must* be mistaken. If that man were Stephen, his father *must* find him out."

As she thought thus, she happened to look at little Boyd, who stood behind his

master's chair : and on Boyd's countenance there was an expression which made Frances fancy he was not altogether unintelligent as to the course of events. It appeared to her that the Irishman was a little puzzled by something or other. A similar expression of countenance she noticed with Rachel, who was in and out of the room at intervals. Rachel was not accustomed to wait at table : but this was a break into the quiet habits of Carey Farm, and she deemed it her duty to look after the parlour-maid, who was not a remarkably clever young person. Frances felt quite certain that Rachel and Boyd were exchanging significant looks. She wondered whether it meant what she hoped it meant.

Suddenly the Honourable Hercules Lyon said, in that harsh grating voice of his which differed from Stephen Heath's so widely :



“Lavington, your idea about common sense and a good wife is all very well, but they don’t mix any more than oil and water. Now, suppose you were married. You’d want your good wife to believe you were out on important business when you were flirting with actresses at the Bagatelle, or losing hundreds to Heath at *écarté*. If she was your model good wife she’d believe it; but then she wouldn’t show much common sense.”

“Ha,” said Lavington, “I see what you want in a wife—prettiness and money, and as little brain as possible. It is a very good investment. I am sorry to say that most of our pretty girls in London have neither money nor brains. Now here am I, a well-preserved bachelor, with a very few grey hairs in my whiskers, and a place in the country, and a theatre in the West-end, and an office in the City, and nobody makes

any proposals. Am I not wasted on an unappreciative generation of ladies?"

"You had better advertise in the *Matrimonial News*, Lavington," said Walter Carey, "if things are growing so very serious. For my part, if I wanted a wife, I should not wait for a lady to ask me."

"Yet that," remarked Captain Heath, "seems quite the fashion in these times. It is always Leap Year. The old chivalrous way of addressing women is gone out of fashion. A good-looking fellow with an independent income considers it the woman's duty to make love to *him* . . . and they do that duty most religiously."

"Not all of them, I hope, Captain Heath," said Frances.

"Not all, certainly, Miss Carey," he replied. "There are some ladies among us still, and I hope a few gentlemen. But with the majority the game of matrimony is like

a game of cards. Who leads wins, if the players are equal: and the ladies like to lead."

"Heath drags in his favourite game whenever there's a chance," said Lavington. "However, it's quite true that there's rather a free-and-easy way of dealing with what used to be thought serious business in times gone by. I suppose it does not matter: husbands and wives are much what they have been since the days of Adam and Eve."

"The Divorce Court is a recent invention," said Carey.

At this point Frances rose, and Captain Heath opened the door for her.

"We don't get claret like yours every day, Carey," said Lavington, luxuriously inhaling the bouquet of a goblet of Lafitte, whose very colour was to the *gourmet* an immediate index of its worth. "Since the cheap clarets came in, what a frightful

amount of poison the Great British public has drunk! When I go to people's houses now-a-days, I get such vile wash that nothing but my native courtesy prevents my asking them to let me have a glass of their servants' table-beer."

"If one could only be sure of malt and hops, ale is the thing for Englishmen," said Walter. "I brew my own: when you are tired of the claret, I'll ring for a tankard. I've some ten years old."

"To-morrow, my friend, to-morrow. With such ale would I begin the day: with such claret would I end it."

"Good policy," said Captain Heath. "And now, I think, Mr. Carey, I will leave you youths to your wine, and ask Miss Carey to give me a cup of coffee. We shall meet again."

The Captain went to the drawing-room, slightly surprising Frances by entering alone

She had Rachel with her, and their conversation had been rather exciting. Rachel had been watching for her to leave the dining-room, and joined her at once, laden, evidently, with momentous intelligence. When Rachel had clutched a great idea, that homely face of hers became poetic in its expression. It was a most garrulous countenance. Frances knew at once the character of anything Rachel had to say. On this occasion she was as thoroughly in earnest as the man who "drew King Priam's curtain at the dead of night."

"Why, Rachel, what's the matter?" asked Frances, when she entered the room. "You look bewildered."

"Well, miss, and so I am. Though naturally magnanimous, there are things which require more extermination than I possess. Have you looked much, Miss Frances, at that gentleman with the carrotty

hair, that calls himself Lyon—Liar, I think it ought to be.”

“O, yes,” said Frances, “I’ve looked at him. How could I help it, when he sat next me at dinner? He is an American gentleman: what have you to say about him?”

“O! he’s an American gentleman, is he?” said Rachel. “I shouldn’t have thought it. Begging your pardon, Miss Frances, I don’t believe he’s either an American or a gentleman.”

“What is he, then?” said Frances, very calmly, not wishing her servitress to discern her interest in the matter.

“He’s an Englishman and a villain, Miss Frances—that’s what he is! I wouldn’t believe it at first; couldn’t think he’d have the mendacity to sit where he did, and talk like he did. And I believe I should have thought I must be wrong if it hadn’t been

for Boyd: he's an infidel Irishman, you know, Miss Frances, but he's as sharp as a shilling razor. Boyd came to me in the passage, and whispered . . .

“‘Who's that opposite the Captain?’

“Says I, ‘An American gentleman, Lyon by name.’

“‘Not he,’ says Boyd. ‘That's master's son Stephen: and how he can sit opposite to his own boy and not see, it is a miracle to me.’

“‘A pack of nonsense!’ said I; but I knew it was true all the time; and that's the mean wretch that has given Mr. Roland—dear young gentleman!—all this trouble. O, I could tear his ugly carroted hair out by the roots, the wretch! Now what's to be done, Miss Frances?”

“I have known this for some time, Rachel,” said Frances; “but I am very glad you have found it out, because it makes me

more certain. I hope to-morrow to expose Stephen Heath, but I am waiting for Mr. Shirley. If you and Boyd agree with me, we must be right."

"There isn't a doubt about it, Miss Frances. Now I tell you what I shall do: I mean to keep a watch on that fellow, and see he doesn't run away. He's mean. If he thinks he's found out, he'll try to get away directly. He shan't do it."

The conversation between Frances and Rachel was interrupted by the arrival of Captain Heath, who came into the room with quite an air of conquest, which Miss Carey did not notice. Rachel retreated. The Captain said, in quite a chivalrous way:

"I hope I have not interrupted important business. These boys like to prolong their claret, and talk politics, or some such nonsense; I am old enough to prefer a cup



of coffee, and some conversation with a charming lady. I trust you will not think me very much in the way."

"I am very glad to see you, Captain Heath," said Frances. "It is pleasant to find one gentleman who will not leave a lady in loneliness. You shall be rewarded with the best cup of Mocha that can be made, fresh roasted and fresh ground ; and, if you think it not altogether wrong, a drop of old cognac will improve it."

To Captain Heath it occurred that Frances was exactly the right sort of woman. He accepted coffee and cognac with alacrity. It was promptly served, and elicited the Captain's serene approval. They talked in easy fashion.

"You are the best *écarté* player I ever met," said Captain Heath. "I had no idea a lady could play cards so well."

"We play cards better than we play chess," she said. "Women have more luck

than men, and guess more cleverly. In a game like chess, which is sheer skill, a woman can no more reach the highest point than she can in mathematics."

"You seem to have thought a good deal on such matters."

"Yes," she replied. "Women can think, if they can do nothing else. And there are some things in which we beat you men altogether. It is unfortunate that men and women seldom trust each other; if they did so thoroughly, the world would be altered. People talk of political and religious and social reforms: they will do no good; what we want is a sexual reform."

"I fear you go beyond me, Miss Carey," said Captain Heath. "I belong to an earlier generation, and am not all scientific. So, though I admire a lady when I see one, I do not understand what you mean by sexual reform."

"It is simple enough," she said. "Men ought to know that women are in some things better than they, and women ought to know the same of men. But this is a dull metaphysical consideration. Let us be personal. What do you think, Captain Heath, of that young American gentleman with yellow hair who sat opposite you?"

"I don't know what to think of him," replied Captain Heath. "He is a strange specimen: but so, indeed, are most of the Americans who come to England. I hope you are not interested in him, Miss Heath, for I confess I don't like him."

"O, I care nothing about him," she replied, thinking all the while how strange it was that Captain Heath, not recognizing his son, should feel an instinct of disgust towards him.

"I should scarcely imagine it possible that you did," said the Captain. "The

young Englishmen of these days are too often bad style; they live too fast, and don't understand how to behave to ladies; but the young Americans seem perfectly abominable. When I was as young as these fellows, society was quite another thing. Ah, those were great days."

"You are in the prime of life still, Captain Heath," said Frances, pleasantly. "I don't care much for boys myself. They think themselves very clever, and are generally very dull."

"It is too true, Miss Carey: but the young ladies of the present day are not all so sensible and wise as you. It is delightful to meet a lady who has such just ideas of life, and such settled principles. You make me wish I could throw away ten years or so. The man whom you deign to accept will be truly fortunate."

"Really, Captain Heath," said Frances,

with something very like a blush, "you pay me too great a compliment. There are plenty of girls much wiser and nicer than I am. Papa taught me many things that girls don't often learn : but after all I have always lived a country life, and so nobody has any right to expect me to be more than a country girl. They would think me a very rough sort of creature in a London drawing-room."

"You would adorn the drawing-room of Royalty, Miss Carey. I never pay compliments : I never flatter : I hope you won't be angry with me for telling you the simple truth about yourself."

"Angry ? O déar, no ! The simple truth is that I am exactly like any other girl who has lived in a village all her life. How long the gentlemen are over their wine !"

"Does that mean that you are getting tired of me ?" asked Captain Heath. "I

fear I am very tiresome to a lively young lady like you."

"O, Captain Heath, how can you say so? Ah, they are moving now. I hear the dogs barking, and voices in the garden. I suppose the moonlight has tempted them out."

"I wish they would stay in the moonlight," said the Captain. "When they come in, my pleasant talk with you will be at an end. Confound all boys, I say."

"He is a very delightful elderly gentleman," thought Frances.

## CHAPTER VI.

## THE SCENE OF THE MURDER.

ALOUETTE.—Father, you surely never knew a murderer.

ASTROLOGOS.—My child, most of our dearest friends are  
murderers :

They murder time and life and wit and oddity,  
They murder God in Sabbaths hideous wearisome,  
They murder poetry by making prose of it,  
They murder love in fashionable marriages,  
They murder beauty through the odious milliners,  
They murder truth in the atrocious newspapers.  
My Alouette, your pretty pure lips flatter me.  
Can I name one friend who is *not* a murderer?

*The Comedy of Dreams.*

WHEN Captain Heath had followed  
Miss Carey to the drawing-room,  
the gentlemen who were left behind made  
the claret-jug pass rapidly. There was a  
little mild jocosity about the Captain.

“The old boy hath a great admiration for your sister, Carey,” said Lavington. “He shows excellent judgment, but Miss Carey was not meant to be thrown away on an elderly gentleman. It is an impertinence, Walter, to talk of your sister : but forgive me for saying she is the most perfect woman I ever saw.”

It was a curious symptom of Walter Carey’s inferior nature that he had a jealous feeling when anyone spoke well of Frances. Always had he been jealous of her. His father had made her more his friend. Everybody saw something in her which Walter, for the life of him, could not see. Kin are not always wise enough to be kind. The position of a man whose sister is intellectually his superior, and thus of necessity unintelligible to him, is rather difficult. I am quite aware that the male sex is apt to regard the female sex as intensely inferior ;



but I look upon the great Feminine Revolt as a thing to be encouraged. Let the Battle of Sex be fought out. Both men and women want to be taught their position in life; both men and women must learn the great truth that one without the other is absolutely incomplete.

"Well," said Walter Carey, "I dare say you are right, Lavington; but I really cannot understand your fancy for a pretty girl. I have renounced these follies of one's youth—I mean to remain a bachelor."

"It is only too likely that I also shall remain a bachelor," said Lavington. "Circumstance is too strong for a man when he has been making a fool of himself all his life. But I tell you what it is, Carey, you may laugh, if you like, for we are all too apt to laugh when we ought to think—but when I come into the presence of a lady like your sister, I cannot help thinking what

fools we all are. The beauty of life—the poetry of life—belongs to woman.”

“You are quite ready to marry, I should think,” said Major Washington F. Butts. “There are lots of women who would be delighted to accept you at once.”

“I shouldn’t care for such acceptances, Major; they might be dishonourable,” said Lavington. “I see now the meaning of the ancient fable about throwing pearls before swine.”

“Which way do you read the fable?” asked Carey.

“No matter,” replied Lavington. “I know a pearl when I see one, even if I have not courage to pick it up. I begin to think that in the modern rapid movement of life we make great mistakes. You, Carey, for instance—why the devil should you come to London and waste your time with fools of both sexes—fools who are also

knaves? Here you have a delightful place, a charming companion in Miss Carey, a fine library—what can you want more? You never go to London for a day without coming back with an unpleasant taste in your mouth.”

“Major,” said Carey to Butts, “do you observe how well Lavington can preach when he tries? When he is tired of Parliament and the Bagatelle, we shall hear him in the pulpit.”

“He will make a sensation,” replied the Major. “He will disestablish the devil. By the way, Mr. Carey, talking of the devil, wasn’t it here you had a murder about a year ago, and wasn’t it Heath’s son that was murdered, and didn’t the murderer escape or something? That’s the sort of thing that makes a man believe there *must* be a devil.”

But Major Washington F. Butts had per-

sonal reasons for that belief which he did not mention.

"The murder took place in my grounds," said Carey, "and the murderer, who escaped from the Asylum, has been at large, but, I expect, is already captured—indeed, it was I who found him, disguised as a railway-guard, when I jumped into the van in a hurry to tell Heath of his house being burnt. It was that kept me in town, but the police are on his track now. Would you like to go and see the place? It will cool us after the wine: there is beautiful moonlight."

"Admirable idea!" said the Major. "I should like to see the place exceedingly. Come along, Lyon."

"Hardly worth while," said that gentleman, in a languid croak. "If you want to see the scene of a murder, commit one yourself, like a gentleman."

"O, nonsense! Come along. It is a

lovely night, just the brilliant moonlight for a tragedy."

"Ay," said Lavington. "There, Major, you speak well and poetically. Give me moonlight for tragedy or comedy—to fight a rival or to kiss a lady. Moonlight! Why, it's the very essence of adventure. By moonlight the serenaders sing and the rapier flashes. By all means let us sally forth and see this scene of murder by moonlight."

They went. The dogs barked as the dining-room windows were thrown open: then it was that Frances heard them. Down to that lovely lawn, where Frances one fair morning had been horror-stricken by what seemed undoubted traces of murder, the party went. Walter Carey constituted himself showman for the occasion.

"Heath," he said, "was not a bad fellow, though perhaps rather a cad. The other

man, Roland, was rather cracked, I fancy, but I did not think he would commit a murder. That he did there's no doubt. He and Heath had been quarreling: he's an awfully strong fellow: and when I saw Heath's watch smashed to fragments just here, and patches of his coat trodden into the grass, and his letters, and a broken pistol with hair on it, I knew what must have happened."

Major Washington F. Butts, who had been listening with interest to this little lecture, was at the same time observant; and he noticed that, while Carey was talking, there was on the countenance of the Honourable Hercules Lyon a curious affrighted expression. The Major, like most Americans, had a faculty for jumping to conclusions: he did so on this occasion.

It was past midnight. Hugh Roland had emerged from his lair in the loft, and was

roaming, as wildly as Bislaveret, when he heard the familiar pleasant sound of dogs barking. A dog's voice magnetizes. "Love me, love my dog," says a cynical old adage. Friend, if thou hast a dog, and lovest him thyself, thou probably art worth loving. Hugh Roland of course concluded that some one had come out of Carey Farm for an after-dinner stroll. He hoped it might be Frances, whose independent mode of action he knew full well. He followed the sound, in the shade of the great trees, and saw Carey and Lavington and the two Americans passing down to the river-side. He placed himself in the deepest depth of shadow and watched them, and listened to their talk.

"So this is the place," said Major Washington F. Butts. "It is a lovely corner for a murder: nobody would be likely to interrupt the gentleman engaged in the business.

Whoever selected it was a real artist, and would be appreciated in New York, where art of all kinds is properly estimated. We don't hang our murderers, you know, Mr. Carey, if they do things in a unique way : they get a few months in prison, where they are supplied with dinners from Delmonico's and interviewed by newspaper editors, and then they get out and marry somebody with money and run for Congress!"

"It strikes me," said Carey, "that we are nearly as bad. A fellow gets let off by shamming illness, and has a comfortable lazy life at the public expense in an Asylum, and, if he manages to escape, nobody takes the trouble to look after him. It's a confounded shame! I have very strong opinions on the matter: and I tell you what it is, Lavington, you ought to question the Home Secretary about it when Parliament meets."



"I will," said Lavington. "I can impale our dull friend—you know the Home Secretary is always the dullest fellow in the ministry—on the horns of a dilemma. Either this murderer of yours is mad or sane; if sane, he ought never to have been sent to the Asylum; if mad, he never ought to have got out of it."

"Yes," said Carey, "that's the right way to put it. It seriously is no joke that a man should be loose who, whether mad or sane, is at any rate capable of homicide—probably of other crimes. I have no feeling about this man; he was an acquaintance of mine—I may say a friend: but human life is sacred, and I can forgive no man who violates it."

Little thought Walter Carey that the man of whom he thus spoke was close at hand—within hearing, almost within reach of him. There stood Hugh Roland, leaning against the trunk of a great oak tree, amply conceal-

ed by its heavy branches, hidden by a darkness more intense for the radiant moonlight flooding that fatal glade to the river. He felt now so confident of an end to his trouble that he did not wince at any word of Walter's. He was glad to hear Walter Carey speak in such a way as to show it was the crime he detested, not the criminal. He wished to feel friendly toward his sweetheart's brother. Had he not promised Frances to wait, he would have come out into the light of the full moon, and taken Hercules Lyon by the collar, and cried . . .

"Scoundrel, you are Stephen Heath. Confess, this instant."

But a promise to Frances was as sacred as the Vow of the Peacock: he curbed his fierce impetuosity of temper, and quietly listened. He heard but little more. The Major and Lyon were muttering something apart. Lavington and Carey lighted cigars, and strolled

slowly back towards the house. In a few moments he heard the front door close behind them, and he was alone.

"It will soon be over now," he thought. "When I was a prisoner, and saw no chance of escape, I thought I was very badly treated. Yes; I sometimes felt rebellious against God. Now I am thankful for all this. I am stronger for having suffered, and my beautiful Frances has given me her love. I have no wish in the world, except that poor Heath may not get into too much trouble about me."

When a man begins to pity his enemy, he is recovering his moral health.

Our party went to the drawing-room for coffee, and Captain Heath's *tête-à-tête* was over. Frances had just been telling him she had heard in the village he was engaged to the famous actress, Miss Clinton. Heath, though proud of being young enough to take

a pretty actress to Richmond, and lucky enough to be able to give her jewelry and bouquets, had certainly not dreamt of marrying the fair and flighty Ethel. No; Frances would have been far more in his way. His talent and her tact would make a fine partnership. He really began to feel quite earnest about it, and wished more than ever that they would remain out in the moonlight, those wanderers.

They had their coffee and tea. Lavington excited the Captain's jealousy by pertinacious attention to Frances. He lounged in a low chair close to her, and made commonplace remarks in a low tone, with an air of mystery. He talked a little London. Why did she not make her brother bring her to town? The country was very pleasant in fine weather, but she ought not to vegetate in it entirely.

“The country in October is far pleasanter

than London," said Frances. "I like these changes of colour in the trees better than the frippery in shop-windows. I would rather hear a robin sing than the best operatic performer you can name. I look upon London as the best place to buy things with your own money; but in the country God gives you things you cannot buy."

"You talk quite poetically, Miss Carey," said Lavington, coffee cup in hand. "Now, do you know? I am not joking, though I fear you'll think so, I adore poetry—though I've been forced to live upon prose all my life. Circumstance is too strong for some people. I am losing I don't know how many thousands a year by a theatre, and O how thankful I should be if somebody would burn it down! Now I get a little real poetry in talking to you; and I shall go back to London refreshed—but at the same time disgusted because I see no chance of

living a simple life like yours. Ah me, how true are the words of Burke... 'What shadows we are, and what shadows we pursue !' Will you not sing me a song, Miss Carey, to calm my perturbed spirit?"

"Do you wish it, really?"

"I do indeed. A touch of music will do us all good. Don't refuse."

Frances did not. She rose and went to the piano, with Lavington and Captain Heath in close attendance. She sang:

"Shadows we are. Our triumph and our trouble  
Pass like a dream, and we are passing too.  
Life is a fancy, glory is a bubble ;  
Shadows we are, and shadows we pursue.

"Sunlight has shadow, cool for those that wander ;  
Moonlight has shadow, safe for those that woo ;  
Ah, on what vanities our life we squander !  
Shadows we are, and shadows we pursue.

"Yet, while ambition in despair is dying,  
Yet, while strong noon slopes slowly to the night,  
Love's diamond lamp will set the phantoms flying,  
Love scorns all shadows, being perfect light."

Soon after this song was over Frances retired, and the gentlemen adjourned to whiskey punch and whist. Captain Heath had his customary luck, and it seemed communicable to his partner; he and Lavington played against Carey and the Major, and the latter handed over a ponderous roll of crisp bank-notes to Lavington when the time of settlement came. I wish Lavington joy of those notes. Carey paid Captain Heath with a cheque.

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## CHAPTER VII.

## A LOVER IN A LOFT.

“*Vel duo vel nemo.*”

THEY went to their whist, these four. Not Hercules Lyon ; he went to bed in a sulk. For Major Washington F. Butts had found opportunity to make him understand he had discovered who he was, and what game he was playing, whence he was more than ever in his power. Butts was within an ace of being murdered during that interview, though he little suspected it. Lyon was growing wild. Lyon would have killed that Mephistopheles of his with infinite delight.



Frances went upstairs, and was joined in her room by Rachel. The loyal old servant was in a state of intense excitement, and her words expanded to more syllables than ever.

"What will you do, Miss Frances?" she said. "Of course you can see it's that diabolical young Heath. You'll take care he doesn't run the country, won't you? He's slipperier than any eel."

"He is, Rachel," said Frances, "but we will take care he doesn't get away. It is most important, for Mr. Roland's sake. Do you think we can slip out while they are playing cards? I want just to tell him we are all quite certain. He will be so glad."

"They won't know anything about it, miss. We can get out quite easy."

Rachel was right. Under the cold bright moonlight Frances found her way to the

loft. Hugh was sitting placidly on the outside step, smoking a cigar and studying astronomy. When he saw Frances he sprang forward and said :

“You *are* kind. You have come to tell me you are satisfied that Lyon is Heath, I know. Am I right?”

“Yes, indeed. I feel quite sure. So does Rachel.”

“They have been down looking at the place where he is supposed to have been murdered,” said Hugh. “I was close by them under that oak to the left. Some of them made jokes about it. Poor Stephen was as white as a sheet of paper, lips and all—whiter than the moonlight itself. I am beginning to pity him, my dear Frances. I really cannot help it. What a miserable creature he must feel, in that disguise, with that atrocious American, obliged to play a part in the presence of yourself, and your

brother, and his own father. Poor wretch! I keep thinking what will happen to him when the time of exposure comes. We were friends, you know, in a way, Frances, though he always thought me a fool, and I always knew he was one. I should like to let him off easily. When I was under the oak to-night, and Lavington was making his silly jokes, I thought what fun it would be to walk straight out, and collar Heath, and say, '*I am Hugh Roland. You are Stephen Heath.*' I did not, because I had promised you, and I pitied him. I hope Mr. Shirley, when he comes, will be able to suggest some way of settling the affair without punishing Heath very much."

"Punishment of some sort might do him good," said Frances. "Take your own case, Hugh. Haven't your troubles been of use to you?"

"By Jove, my darling, I should think

they have. Why, I'm twice the man I was before they made me out a murderer and a madman. I've learnt to beat trouble. I'm afraid of nothing now, thanks to my own strength and your love. I had not the remotest idea of my own natural power till all this happened. Now, whatever occurred to me, I should be patient and hopeful. What seemed hideous misery has turned out the best of good fortune. Dear old Shirley has helped me. You have loved me. I have found out that there is work to be done in the world, and that I can do some of it. Though I am in hiding at this moment, Frances, and shall have to sleep on straw, I swear there is not a happier man anywhere under the rays of this lovely moon. I look forward to a happy future. You and I . . . well, it is too late to-night to build castles . . . I shall dream of some

charming châteaux on my wisp of straw.

Won't you dream too?"

Frances laughed.

"O yes," she said, "I will dream . . . if I can. But I suppose to-morrow will bring reality, and an end of all this trouble."

"The trouble is over, darling," said Hugh, pressing her hand, and looking into her lovely eyes. "We love each other: is not that enough?"

"Quite enough," she said: "but I am so impatient for to-morrow, and for all this trouble and mystery to be over. Dear me! I wonder what Walter will say."

"I wonder what poor Captain Heath will say?" replied Hugh Roland—"and I also wonder what poetical quotation dear old Shirley will find that is adequate to the occasion."

"It will puzzle that illustrious poet of his," answered Frances, laughing. "And

now, Hugh, I must run away, or I may be missed. Good night: don't do anything rash."

"No, I won't—unless it is rash to dream of you."

A vision of her beautiful face in the moonlight haunted Hugh Roland on his straw all through that night. He slept but little; he was approaching too nearly the time of his final triumph; yet the long hours were pleasant. A turret-clock on the stables of Carey Farm kept him acquainted with the lapse of time. He enjoyed its gradual passage, while the man who had caused his trouble might have cried with Faustus:

"Currite, currite lente, noctis equi."

## CHAPTER VIII.

## MOONLIGHT IN LONDON.

Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep !  
The river glideth at his own sweet will.

WORDSWORTH.

SOMEWHERE about the time that Frances and Hugh were holding this brief confabulation, three persons were out in the moonlight in a very different scene. They were standing on the Thames Embankment, looking at the silent stream. The moon was very bright, and made the edifices on the river banks look beautiful, silvering the sombre railway-bridges, making

every wharf a mystery, turning the tall shot-towers into pillars of wonder, and glorifying the amorphous mass of Barry's Parliamentary palace. Three persons, for whom a brougham stood waiting : Sir Charles Wray, his lovely little daughter, and Count Cassius Grimani.

How came they there ? Simply enough. There was a great book-sale at Sotheby's. A bibliomaniac banker had died, and his family at once sent his library for sale. It contained some unique books, which Sir Charles Wray coveted, so he resolved to go to London to buy. By a curious coincidence, Count Cassius had just heard from Italy that a marvellous violinist, Roderigo Vanni, had reached London, and was about to give to a select audience, at the residence in Park Lane of a ducal amateur, an example of his powers. Books drew the General to town, and music the Count ; and so Cecilia



had a brief dose of London, which she enjoyed intensely.

Sir Charles stayed at the Clarendon. The book-sale was a serious business, and resulted in his writing rather a heavy cheque on Drummond's. Signor Vanni's performance was in the evening, and was an amazing success. Count Cassius and Cecilia were in ecstasies. The music given was all his own. In some string quartettes he had accomplished players of viola, violoncello, and double bass; but his own improvised solos were the most remarkable part of the entertainment. With Vanni the violin was a living creature. It rejoiced, it sang, it wailed, it wept, it made love, it execrated. There was passion in the strings—passion all but articulate. The "Songs without Words" of Mendelssohn may be interpreted in many ways to many hearers, but Vanni's wordless music had meaning unmistakeable.

It was too much for Cecilia. The amazing melodies seemed to pierce her like a thin blade of steel. Before the performance was half over, she said to her father,

“This is very beautiful, but I cannot bear it. Let me go, please.”

So they left, and tranquillized Cecilia's nerves by a moonlight drive through London. The homely beauty and massive power of the world's chief capital come out beneath the moon. Gradually the streets grow quiet: the crowds from theatre and music-hall pour forth and sup; the lights of oyster-houses are extinguished; the cabs are few and far between. Town goes to bed earlier now than when I knew it first; we are growing moral and moderate; still Pleasure is wide awake in clubs and drawing-rooms, and business is sleepless in a host of newspaper offices. Early enough too, there are those who wake. Billingsgate is alive

with the harvest of the sea ere the sun has long risen ; multitudinous waggons, laden with the kindly fruits of the earth, crowd every avenue of Covent Garden before the editors of the morning papers have got into their first doze. The sleeplessness of a mighty city seems to me its most fascinating characteristic. Traverse London at what hour you will, never need you lack company.

These three stood silent, looking at the Thames, that glided with unconscious power, and mirrored the full moon. Sir Charles was the first to speak.

“I wonder whether our great king, Alfred, stood here a thousand years ago, and had a vision of what his little town would become? How difficult it is to bring back the past ! London was a village then, and the Danes who besieged it were a handful of half-barbarians, and yet it is quite

clear that the statesman and soldier and poet Alfred gave England its present greatness. Nothing can be judged by mere magnitude. Xerxes could not do with a million men what Cæsar could do with his tenth legion."

"If it were possible to live in several great eras of the world, and to remember and compare one's experiences, how delightful that would be! I believe in metempsychosis. But the memory perishes, being a material faculty. What we want is a new method of memory. Instead of writing our records on the tablets of the brain, we ought to find some means of incorporating them with the finer fibre of the soul. Then we might carry into another state anything worth reminiscence."

Thus spake Count Cassius. Cecilia exclaimed:

"What a pity a river has no memory!

What a delightful story Thames could tell us if it were gifted with speech! Only think, Papa, this river knew Shakespeare, your favourite poet, and the Count's."

"Not yours?" said Sir Charles.

"O, I know nothing about him, Papa. Count Cassius is my favourite poet."

"Thank you," he said. "I shall go on rhyming after that encouragement. But if Thames has no memory, it has a fine creative power, for nobody can deny that Thames created London. It is the greatest river in the world, having built the greatest city."

"Ilissus and Tiber would quarrel with you on that point," said Sir Charles. "Seine would certainly brag of its Paris, and it is possible that Spree might be even more remonstrative. Then think of the indignant Liffey."

"Papa, if you are going to talk geography,

I shall rebel. I never could understand it. I had a dreadful governess once, Count Cassius, who made me draw maps; and, O dear! you *should* have seen them when they were drawn!—they used to look like big cobwebs, and the towns in them like spiders with more legs than usual.”

They drove back to the Clarendon, and Sir Charles and Cecilia went to bed: not Count Cassius, who was singularly sleepless. Partly it was this great London through which he had wandered; partly it was the witchcraft of Vanni’s brain-harassing melodies . . . melodies strangely stimulant through their daring newness; partly it was Cecilia. He went out into the infinite street-labyrinth of London, wandering without definite purpose.


“This is London,” he thought, “the great work of the English race. There has never been such another city. The noblest life

and the vilest are close together here. It is a terrible friendly monster. The first Londoner you meet may knock you down and take your purse or invite you to dinner. How well Byron knew it!

‘Damn your eyes! your money or your life!’

Byron was just like London; brutal, yet gentle; coarse, yet full of lovely poetry; selfish, yet generous. Yes: I take it that Shakespeare was like England, and Byron like London. Other rivers besides this imperial and imperious stream traversed the large meadows and wide woodlands of Shakespeare’s romance: country as well as city he understood, and the wood of Arden was dearer to him than Jack Falstaff’s tavern.

“Yes; and here one sees where England is really so strong. Though its fierce politics and vast commerce make huge cities, yet the country is greater than these cities.



There is the proprietor of the greatest newspaper in the world, a property worth one of our dukedoms, choosing to call himself a quiet country gentleman. These English are like Antaeus ; they get strength from their mother Earth. London itself rushes into the country. It embraces the country in its parks and squares."

Thus did Count Cassius soliloquize. Then he thought of Roderigo Vanni's melodies, which murdered sleep. Then he thought of Cecilia. The hazel eyes, the lovely voice, the sweet rose-bud mouth were before him.

"Ay, I have met my fate. She is the perfectest piece of imperfection God ever moulded. She might have been with Boccaccio's fair brigade, the sweetest freshest merriest of them all. She must be mine. She *is* mine. She is pure melody and vivid life. She is like a lark lost in the blue ; like a rivulet that laughs as it breaks over



the stones and hurries away to have some fun in the forest; like a nymph who dull folk would say had no soul, simply because she is all soul, and that fragile slender body of hers is only the diaphanous apparel of a beautiful spirit."

I believe Count Cassius Grimani was gesticulating and talking slowly in this monologue of his. He was certainly unaware that the sun had risen. He was also unaware of a stalwart policeman, against whom he ran with rather strong impact, and who very courteously begged his pardon for being nearly knocked down. Aroused hereby from his deep reverie, he treated that gentleman in blue with that argent courtesy which he had heard such gentlemen liked, and awoke to a delicious fresh fragrance of fruit and flowers and other vegetables. He was at the corner of Covent Garden.

To him the sight was strange. He had

eaten celery, and seen celery growing in his gardens; but when he became aware of waggon after waggon of that vegetable, piled nearly as high as the houses, he began to imagine the insatiable appetite of that Monster, London. Other arrivals perplexed him and amazed him in the same way. Was this a nightmare? Where could be the immeasurable gardens that supplied these myriads of parsnips and turnips and cabbages? There could not be room for them in England, with all its cities and factories and railways; so at least it seemed to Count Cassius. He wandered through all parts of the famous market with astonished gaze: and he wondered, as most men wonder who take the trouble to think, why the ducal proprietor of the greatest flower and fruit and vegetable market in the world does not make it what it ought to be. Covent Garden would not be too large if it

stretched from the Strand to Long Acre  
and from Wellington Street to Exeter Street.  
Who would miss Exeter Hall?

## CHAPTER IX.

## AT THE RAILWAY TERMINUS.

Life's highway has a million curious travellers ;  
 The pure bride elbowed by the wretched courtesan ;  
 The poet by a statesman or a pickpocket ;  
 The gentle man by fellows self-styled gentlemen.

*The Comedy of Dreams.*

THE railways have shaken up England marvellously. Everybody travels. Everybody meets every other body that he knows. It is impossible that it should be otherwise, seeing the vast movement which facility and cheapness have caused. The fundamental maxim of all sane political economists—that *supply creates demand*—has been admirably proved by our railway

system. Travel, either a costly luxury or an unpleasant necessity within my own recollection, has become an easy usage of life. All the world is on the wing. It is quite an exception to be on the platform of a London terminus, and not to meet somebody you know. I am sure I do not remember when I did it last.

Any way, some people who knew each other met on the platform of the Great Southern Railway's terminus this day. Gabriel Shirley, having read Frances Carey's letter, resolved to start for Avonside at once, but he first called on the Southpool Consul, who was so interested in the affair that he promised to go down with him, if possible. The curious course of events had for him a double interest, consular and literary. When Mr. Shirley reached the station, rather before his time, he wandered from one part of it to another with that chronic curiosity

of his. A railway station is always full of interest. The very placards on its walls, where the largest newspaper in the world jostles the newspaper with the largest circulation, and where cheap claret comes too suggestively near Dr. Katerfelto's Liver Pills, are in themselves a literature. The refreshment-rooms might usually furnish a fine field for any analytical chemist who cared to trace ether in sherry and Liebig in soup. But the people who travel are an unfailing and perpetual source of delight. Theirs is infinite variety. Here is the accomplished traveller, who is always on the road, and whose mere look causes the railway guard to show him the most comfortable corner of the newest carriage. Contrast him with the nervous fidgety traveller, who generally gets into the wrong class, often gets out at the wrong station, and invariably loses some of his luggage. And how mingled are

those who travel for pleasure merely with travellers on regular business, and with travellers whom some sudden trouble has dragged from home !

Gabriel Shirley had been pursuing his studies for ten minutes when the tall form of Julian Orchard became visible. He walked with the same dreamy isolation along a railway platform as if he had been in a Californian valley of tree-giants.

"I am glad you are able to come," said Shirley. "They are pleasant people at Avonside, apart from this bit of adventure and romance. You want, I know, to see many phases of English life. As the illustrious poet hath it :

'What exile would not gladly cross the foam,  
For one warm evening in an English home?'"

"That poet of yours is right," said Orchard. "I am glad to be back in the land my grandfather left in a huff, because he quar-

relled with his master. He was a plumber and glazier, like his father and grandfather before him; and if he hadn't been of an irritable temper, I should probably be mending windows and cistern-pipes in the good town of Warminster at this moment. I daresay I should have been just as happy. Now I've seen a new world, and formed some new wishes; but I don't know that I have formed any new ideas. We get bigger aspirations in America, just because Hudson is bigger than Thames, and Superior than Windermere, but I don't think any of us—not even Emerson—has found a new idea yet.”

“People talk about your poets—Walt Whitman and Joachim Miller.”

“Men who shriek—quite out of tune. But there are some acquaintances of ours, surely. That beautiful face I could never forget, having seen it once.”



It was Cecilia's.

Julian Orchard had the gift of reverie. Men are like mirrors : they cannot all reflect equally. The best mirror in the world made from mercury behind glass reflects about two-thirds of the quality of any object placed before it. Therefore, lady fair, add just one half more to the beauty you see in your looking-glass (supposing it to be a really good one), and you may obtain some faint idea of your own sweet self. Now the opinion one man or one woman forms of another man or another woman is, in some respects, analogous to the reflexion of the looking-glass. Some of us are very bad mirrors indeed : we cannot see half the beauty and goodness of other people. Some of us are cracked mirrors, distorting beauty into ugliness through the warps in our own fibre. Some of us are adequate ; appreciate ; reflect man and woman at their


best. Still other human mirrors are there which reveal to men and women elements of character whose existence they never would have guessed. Such was Shakespeare: such, in his way, was Julian Orchard. He knew more of the human creatures he saw than they, for the most part, contrived to see themselves. Look at a photograph through a magnifier, and you will find in it something which the naked eye cannot discover. In the same way the observer of human character might discover in most men points by themselves untraceable.

Thus was it with Julian Orchard. Surface critics who read his books accused them of containing creatures unseen in the heavens above, or in the earth beneath, or in the waters under the earth. They complained bitterly, dolorously, with occasional ferocity of epithet that would have been an

oath save for the fact that they were gentlemen writing for gentlemen, that this man Orchard introduced into the nineteenth century common-place life characters that could no more live there than a goshawk in a canary's cage.

"I see no such people," quoth the purblind critic. "When did any man meet a troubadour in the Strand? A perfect lady, who has never opened a book or learnt an alphabet, yet who knows her Shakespeare and her Wordsworth, is quite impossible in these days of South Kensington and School Boards. Mr. Orchard should really try to decribe people who exist."

This poor dear critic should not be abused : let us pity him. His misfortune is it, and by no means his fault, that he cannot see what Julian Orchard sees. Try him by the five senses. Can he see the wonderful green of a sunset sky under fringe



of orange? Can he feel the difference between velvet and velveteen? Can he hear the difference between a blackbird and a thrush? Can he smell the difference between a white violet and a blue? Can he taste the difference between the water from a well and the water from a brook? If not—and if there are those who can—what right has this fellow to revile Julian Orchard for seeing more in life than he can see? And yet this really is the basis of half our hostile criticism. A writer takes an original line; because it is original, he has to work it out unguided; he often goes wrong. The critic can see well enough that he is going wrong, but cannot get at the idea which is driving him, and which will bring him right at last.

Now the group of three whom Orchard and Shirley met could not be regarded as commonplace by the crassest observer. In

Sir Charles Wray met the lover of books and the teacher of war. Hereditary habit had made a soldier of him, and absolute fearlessness had made him a successful commander; but he regarded war with the necessary contempt of a calm intellect. He had wasted his youth on military training, else might he have done nobler work. Thus he felt; and he satisfied himself with the delight of studying what other men had done. In him could Julian Orchard perceive a spirit not unlike Sir Philip Sidney's. But ordinary people who met him on that platform would not at once compare him with the man who wrote of

“..... our sweet enemy, France,”

any more than they would see in Cecilia the very soul of music, a human bird, a creature so Psyche-like that the pen's lightest touch seems to take the bloom from her. And as for that dark flushed grave vivid indifferent

Count Cassius Grimani, who would deem him to be a Boccaccio-Byron? Yet thus did Julian Orchard think of these three.

There were greetings of surprise. Neither expected to meet the other. Sir Charles briefly told what had brought them to town . . . music and books.

"Yes," said Cecilia to Julian Orchard, "those are Papa's fancies and mine."

"But surely you like books," said Orchard.

"I like yours," she replied, "for Count Cassius found music in them for me."

"Ah," said the Consul to Shirley, "how delightful is a compliment from lovely lips!"

"You agree with the illustrious poet, I presume :

'The critics call me clever; I say *no*.

I will assent when ladies call me so.'

But, Sir Charles," said our old friend, turning to the General, "are you going to

Monckton Manor now? I mean, *must* you go? I ask because we have a curious adventure in front of us; Hugh Roland, who was falsely accused of murder and madness, is in hiding at Carey Farm; the man whom he is supposed to have murdered is there also, disguised as an American, that rascal who called himself the Honourable Hercules Lyon. I have been summoned by Miss Carey, whom I greatly admire for her clear intellect and high courage, and who will marry Roland by-and-by I hope, to assist at the explosion that must ensue. Now, Sir Charles, if you are not obliged to be at Monckton Manor to-day, I think you would find the last scene of this odd drama very interesting; and I think also of Miss Carey, who will be rather tried at the final moment, and who would be glad of Miss Wray's companionship."

"Do you really think this child could be

of any use to a strong-minded lady like Miss Carey?" asked Sir Charles, smiling.

"Of infinite use," said Orchard, ere Gabriel Shirley could reply. "Why, Sir Charles, if I were dying in agony, and held your daughter's hand in mine, and looked into her eyes, I should know that God was close by, and I should see him soon. You've known Miss Cecilia all her life, and you haven't taken the trouble to inquire whether she's different from other folk's daughters; but the first time I saw her I knew the difference. Humanity is not cut all out of the same block, Sir Charles, or by the same sculptor. I know the poetic lady when I see her, and I have seen only two in England yet."

You should have seen Cecilia blush during this incoherent rhapsody! A blush on such a face puts the rarest of sunsets, the delicatest of roses, the supreme painter, to utter



shame as an effect of colour. And just watch eye and lip at such a moment. There is a light in the one, a curve of the other, which are beyond any meagre words. How is it ?

“Blush, darling, blush !” But she said, “Why ?  
A blush means pain or sorrow or fear.”

He said, “Not here.

“You see a blush on the sunset sky ;  
In the rose’s heart a blush you see :  
Sweet, blush for me.

“There’s a blush in the west for the resting sun :  
There’s a blush in the rose for summer’s kiss :  
O yield me this !

“Give me one faint blush for the joy I have won :  
Give me one blush for thy loveliness.”  
She murmured, “Yes.”

Madrigals ought to go out of fashion ; they do not fit into any accurate system of political economy.

Both Sir Charles and Count Cassius were so interested in the approaching climax of Hugh Roland’s romance that it was decided

to stop at Chessington station, and the telegraph was employed to secure accommodation. They had a pleasant journey, these five. The bright October sunlight irradiated mile after mile of golden woodland and green meadow and shining stream. They talked of many things—commencing, naturally, with the adventure of the moment.

“Mr. Roland ought to write his experience when all this is over,” said Count Cassius. “I rather envy him. I should like to have been a lunatic and a railway-guard. But nobody has ever taken the trouble to accuse me of murder.”

“Rather a risk, though,” said Sir Charles. “How very easily he might have been hanged! I should like to know whether the jury were all so stupid they thought him mad, or whether some clever fellow among them had the instinct that he was innocent, and purposely suggested his insanity.”

“The English jury,” remarked Mr. Shirley, “is often wrong and often obstinate, but it is an admirable machine for getting at that plain common-sense which is our best practical guide. When they do make a mistake, it is usually of so ludicrous a character that it serves as a warning to subsequent juries. The most conspicuous failures are in actions for breach of promise of marriage : for jurymen are generally fathers of families, and give indignant damages, because they think how they should like to punish a man who jilted their own daughters.”

“That form of action is barbarous,” said Orchard ; “but the moment marriage passed from the hands of the Church, it ceased to be a sacrament and became a contract, whence, of course, an offence against its law can only be punished commercially. There are three views of marriage—the ecclesiastic, the commercial, and the poetic :

the second of these is the only one of which law takes account in these degenerate days. But the poetic marriage will always exist for those to whom it is possible."

"You are a heathen, Orchard," said Gabriel Shirley. "As the illustrious poet hath it :

'He sees Apollo on the hills of dawn,  
For him flushed Hebe trips across the lawn,  
And when the rainbow spans the world, he knows  
'Tis but the bright path where swift Iris goes.'"

"Well, I *am* a heathen ; and I laugh to scorn your illustrious poet ; and I ask you, was not Wordsworth a heathen, who longed to be

' A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn ?'

I am catholic, friend Gabriel : all ages are mine, all teachers, all creeds, all heroes, all women, all gods. Because I behold the serene form of Him who taught wondrous wisdom on the Mount of Olives, am I to be deaf to the sayings of Gautama Buddha, to-

the golden words of Plato? Because the virgin-mother who watched with sad solicitude the path of her wondrous son from the cradle to the cross is so tender a picture, am I to be blind to the surpassing wisdom of Athene the wise and chaste and invincible, springing in panoply from the brain of Zeus—the guiding haunting conquering Wisdom of the World? Rome cheered the playwright slave who said,

‘Homo sum; nihil humani a me alienum puto;

I go farther and say,

‘Deus sum; nihil divini a me alienum puto.’”

“A magnificent assumption,” said Count Cassius; “it lifts us to a higher horizon. It is like climbing a lofty mountain to be nearer God and to see more of the world.”

“Yes,” quoth Gabriel Shirley, “and man’s happiness depends on his horizon. The higher we rise the wider the circle, the nearer the absolute light. Your modern

blunderers—negative men who call themselves positivists, lovers of humbug who take the name of spiritualists—dig deep holes, and descend into them to narrow their horizon. They are moles, earth-worms, newts; they cannot learn a lesson from the eagle and the lark.”

## CHAPTER X.

## THE CRISIS.

ASTROLOGOS.—No good was ever done by any criminal.  
 No villany succeeds. Cæsars, Iscariots,  
 Buonapartes, always bring dark doom upon their heads.  
 The law is constant.

RAPHAEL.—I have known some rascals live  
 Golden delicious lives unkicked.

ASTROLOGOS.—Ah, wait a while.  
 More worlds there are than one, my lord. They know it  
 now.


*The Comedy of Dreams.*

FRANCES, knowing well that Gabriel Shirley would not fail her, snatched an early visit to the loft in the morning, and preached patience to her prisoner. O that loft! It was her favourite workshop for

years. There she had kept the material for her flower-beds ; there she had distilled sweet waters from rosemary and mint, from violet and rose. She had a delicate manipulation of finger, an innate chemistry, which made her a perfect mistress of such arts . . . arts which her father had taught her, supplying her with the most skilfully made instruments. It was to her a pleasant reminder of his teaching when she set alight the bright brass furnace of her miniature still, and caught drop on drop of some perfume or cordial as they dript slowly from the worm. Mr. Carey had been a spiritualist—by which I do not mean a ghost seer. He saw in all the movement of the world the will of the Deity. There was no book he read with Frances, no flower he grew, no problem of mathematics or chemistry he tried with her, in which were forgotten the Alpha and Omega of life. In his time the Negativists



who call their creed Positivism were in an infantile state : Caliban was a baby. But if they had been of greater importance, Mr. Carey would not have brought a refutation of their nonsense into the development of his daughter's mind. He caught what he deemed to be truth—what, indeed, he knew to be truth. He left falsehood alone. Why should the fair mirror of his daughter's mind reflect for even a moment the lies of fools ? The man who teaches a child that certain untruths have been uttered, and then tries to prove them untrue, is like the stupid old nurse who frightens children with ogres and bogies. Why should a young creature, fresh from God's hand, be told that there are persons who deny there is a God ? Why should a being, fitly moulded of spirit and soul, of flesh and blood, be assured that it is the fashion to regard the monkey as his great-grandfather ? Why should sham



science be allowed to confront the immutable truth of God, who made these children of men in His own image?

Frances had received no such teaching. Mr. Carey's library contained no books of the School of Mud. On his shelves he would have placed neither Baudelaire nor Swinburne, neither Darwin nor Mill. He held to the School of Light. Plato was there, and Aristotle also, friends and foes, but neither negative : Homer and Shakespeare were there. In the course of his London practice, Frances's father had often shown the power of finding medicine for a mind diseased ; and this power is obtainable only from intercourse with the purest minds of the race—the High Priests of God.

Into this loft, sacred to many memories, Frances found that love had crept. She was ashamed. Perhaps she thought Hugh Roland something greater than he was ;

perhaps she had a touch of Julian Orchard's faculty, and could discover more in him than he could realize for himself. The latter being the case, I take it she will be a perfect wife: for should not a wife be an angel, touching with a wand the undeveloped creature she has wedded, and teaching him what latent power he has?

Between Frances and Hugh the conversation was brief, but not unsatisfactory. Frances had to run away to prepare breakfast for her brother's illustrious visitors: for was not the Honourable Hercules Lyon among them, an American of the very uppermost five hundred? So, as I have said, their dialogue was short . . . and I think it was almost inarticulate. Lovers have wondrous ways of saying everything.

Mr. Lyon came down to breakfast at ten—the Major had probably used some persuasion. Mr. Lyon was surly and ungra-

cious, and ate his cold grouse as if he had a quarrel with it. Major Washington F. Butts wore a sinister smile. Lavington and Heath looked a little tired, and did not seem at all amused by their correspondence, which was voluminous. Perhaps a specimen of the M.P.'s will suffice :

“ Bagatelle. Thursday.

“ Money, my boy—money. Aaron Wolf has let me have a monkey for a month. You know the blood-sucker's terms. The Clinton is in a rage.

“ D. W.”

Lavington curled his moustache ; silently execrated the Jew and the lady ; plunged into an omelet, made under Rachel's inspection from the freshest of eggs.

“ By Jove ! Carey,” he said, “ this is the most delicious omelet I ever tasted ! It would give me an appetite if I were going

to be hanged. As to your coffee, Miss Carey, I call it nectar. What is your secret?"

"Buy Mocha," said Frances; "grind it yourself; be sure the water boils. But never boil the coffee. You see, Mr. Lavington, the simplest things are the most difficult to ordinary minds. There is not one in a hundred who knows when a kettle is boiling, though everybody knows how far it is from the earth to the moon, and what is Prince Bismarck's policy, and what will be the Conservative majority at the next election. Knowing those things does not give you good coffee."


"We certainly learn a great number of unnecessary things," said Lavington. "We are slaves of fashion. I remember when at school I learnt Euclid and the Catechism and the History of England and several other things of that sort, and I have arrived

at mature age without making use of any of them. Indeed I don't know one from the other, and my duty to my neighbour may be an isosceles triangle, for aught I know."

The morning was one of those soft sunny autumnal days full of languor, when even the robins seem too lazy to sing, when there is no wind to lift the haze, when the clouds sleep. Breakfast lingered; then they lounged out on the lawn and smoked, while Boyd at intervals brought soda and brandy to the thirstier souls. Frances, who had housekeeping affairs to manage, was looking through the window at them for a moment while she waited for Rachel. Eager for Shirley to come, and the climax to arrive, Frances yet could not help studying these people among whom her brother had so strangely fallen. She half guessed their fast factitious gambling life in London; she saw their torpid ebrious life in their country.

holiday; connecting the two, and drawing conclusions guided by an intuition which made up for absence of experience, she was heartily sorry her brother Walter was mixed up with such people. But the exposure was at hand; when it came she felt sure that Walter would be his old self again.

Did she take sufficiently into consideration the feelings of a man with not the clearest conceivable intellect, not the most fluent and flexible of tempers? The wise man is the man who can be convinced; the wiser man is the man who convinces himself. Frances, if she had thought about it, would have remembered that Walter had a fine strong obstinacy about him; but her enthusiastic expectation of Heath's exposure made her forgetful of it; she was herself rejoicing in the thought that truth would be made manifest, and she fondly fancied everyone else would rejoice likewise. Such are



the dreams of sanguine youth. Truth *does* win in time, though always tardily, and often too late to delight the noble soul who first told the truth. I mean in this world; God lets no man lose. No worthy work can be fruitless to the worker. The fashionable scribbler who coins annual thousands must pity poor Mr. Milton whose over-estimated Epic brought him less than enough to pay for a Richmond dinner. Where is Milton now, my friend? What power has God intrusted to that lofty spirit?

Frances was very pretty, standing by the window seat in a reverie, longing for Gabriel Shirley, waiting for Rachel. Open lace sleeves fell back over one warm round arm, which she had raised to rest on the window; and her eyes were dreamily fixed, as if she beheld a vision of "the land which is very far off." Had Hugh Roland been able to see her from his prison among the



bulbs, he would have been delighted, for he would have felt quite sure she was dreaming of him. Was she ?

To her came Rachel presently ; too soon, perhaps. Rachel had a grievance.

“That Boyd, Miss,” she began abruptly, as was usual with her, “is getting very provocative and dictorial. He pretends that nobody knows anything about wines and spirits except him and Captain Heath ; and Master Walter is so careless it’s no use talking to him. And it’s a sin and a shame to give your poor dear Papa’s dear wine, Miss Frances, to them Londoners that go to public houses and drink beer crammed full of Cockle’s Index.”

It has been suggested that perchance Rachel meant *cocculus indicus*. She was the most honest and careful of servants ; she worshipped, in her quaint homely way, the master whose phrases she distorted : and it seemed

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to her almost sacrilege that these outsiders should be drinking wines which her master had liked.

"Never mind, Rachel," said Frances, dreamily. "We shall get rid of them all soon. A bottle or two of wine doesn't matter. Mr. Shirley will be here in an hour or two. Come, I'm ready to arrange about luncheon."

"Well, miss," said Rachel, "of course you know best; but that isn't the sort of people I should care to supply with the best of victuals."

Frances laughed.

"Perhaps some of them will lose their appetite, Rachel, before the day is over. Don't begrudge them something to eat."

"I do, though," said Rachel, so energetically shaking her head that the white head-dress which crowned it looked dangerously like falling. "Master Walter's got hold of

a bad lot, and the sooner they go the better. As to Captain Heath—why, Miss, I think he's possessed, or he'd know his own son, though he had put his head in yellow ochre."

Patience. Who felt the need of it most? —Frances, amid her unwelcome guests, compelled to talk gaily and to entertain pleasantly—or Hugh, alone in his loft, with nothing to occupy him? Hugh ought to have been more patient than Frances: but I doubt it. He knew that the man who had tried for his own selfish ends to wreck his life was within his reach; he longed to spring upon him. Inaction is very wearisome. He was quite sure of his darling, and pretty sure of his enemy; but meanwhile he was a prisoner in a loft, with no companions but a few spiders, who would very much have preferred his being somewhere else. He had not long to wait. Ay, but somehow

every minute seemed an hour, as he remained there in the dark, fettered by his promise to Frances, and not knowing in the least what was going on outside. Nothing is so trying to a man of strong will as this compression. Action is glory, even when action is failure. But to wait, while others act, is intolerable. I am disposed to think that Frances had less to bear than Hugh at this time.

There was luncheon : after luncheon there was more indolent wandering about the grounds. Lavington was glad to forget the Bagatelle at this moment ; he left it to his cousin Dick with infinite satisfaction. The theatre, alas ! could not run away : but Miss Ethel Clinton might, and he heartily wished she would. Lavington was beginning to think that he had better try some new line, and to wonder whether America or Australia might suit him. Theatre and lupanar

fascinate for a time, but when they begin to tire, how tiresome they are! Butts and Lyon (since Lyon I may as well call him yet) had surly interviews in corners; the two men were not happy in their minds, evidently. Captain Heath, whenever he had an opportunity, got up an old-fashioned flirtation with Frances. He was hard hit, you could see. He began to think that it was time he sowed his wild oats and settled down for the second time in life. There is nothing so lively as the rejuvenescence of an elderly gentleman. Captain Heath felt a boy again in the presence of Frances. He did his utmost to impress on her his exuberant youthfulness. If he failed, it was perhaps because she had in her mind's eye an impatient young fellow in a loft.

Afternoon came at last. Frances had been expecting all day, though she did not quite know what to expect. Her main and

prevalent motive was dear old wide-shouldered blue-coated staff-wielding Gabriel Shirley, opening the garden-gate like a *Deus ex machina*, and settling matters promptly. Not thus did the Destinies decide. When our traveller from London reached the chief Chessington hotel, they found they could have a waggonette and four horses—whereupon the American Consul slightly astonished everybody by remarking that he was a member of the New York Four-in-Hand Club, and would handle the ribbons with pleasure. A man who says he can drive four-in-hand becomes an autocrat at once. It was the very last thing any of the party expected from Julian Orchard. To begin with, he looked a great deal too tall to be perched on a box seat; and then nobody ever heard of American four-in-hand; and finally, and most exstinctively, he had written books. Now the book-writing and

the team-driving faculties so seldom co-exist in the same being that everybody will share the surprise of Sir Charles Wray and Gabriel Shirley at the Consul's cool assumption of the ribbons. As to Count Cassius, he was never astonished at anything that happened in England, and he was very much engaged with Cecilia. So Sir Charles and Gabriel Shirley talked to each other—quaint talk of books and antiquities—on one side the waggonette; and Count Cassius and Cecilia chattered music and scenery, with a gay unconscious careless enjoyment, as if no living creature heard them, on the other; and Julian Orchard proved his skill as a whip by making four screws do six miles in twenty-five minutes, and as a student of human nature by getting a great deal of information from the groom by his side, whose stupidity was in Chessington proverbial. If there was a drop of juice in an orange, Orchard's

strong grip would get it out. This groom was what they call in the west country "half saved." Brought up in a stable, foaled one might almost say, for he was found deserted amid the hoofs of the horses, the poor fellow had really more intimate intercourse with the equine than with the human race. What intellect he had ran into this special groove. He could understand the neigh of a horse better than the command of his master. The fiercest stallion would whinny at his approach, and court his notice; the wildest mare, stung by the Summer œstrus, would run to him at a call, and follow him quietly to be harnessed. He had been found, a baby, in the stables of the Griffin at Witheridge; and the landlady of that inn, a kind-hearted widow, decided that he might live on the premises, prompted thereto by the ostler's wife, who was childless, yet loved children. He was called Timothy.



Griffin; for the ostler's name was Timothy, and the sign of the inn was Griffin. He could never be taught anything; to this day, being probably about fifty, he cannot read; but he could groom a horse and ride a horse when he was an imp half a dozen years old. Always he has slept in loft and stable, this Tim Griffin.

“I’ve seen a four-post bedstead, sir,” he said to Julian Orchard, as they whirled along the road to Avonside,—“that off-leader’s got a fly on her flank—ah! *that* won’t bite again—but I like to lie on whole-some straw among the four legs of a horse. You needn’t be afraid of thieves. And horses are so kind! There was an Irish horse, a famous hunter, called Conne-mara, that we had for ever so long while his master was away ill. I used to sleep in his loose-box: and one sharp Winter I had the rheumatics so bad it nearly killed me:

and Connemara used to lie down in his box and as good as tell me to come to him, and I'd lie on his warm side and lose my pain, and he would not move all night—though other times he was a most restless horse, and a regular crib biter. But he liked me, you see, sir—and he knew I was ill. Poor old horse! He broke his leg in a water-jump, and had to be shot. He was one of the best friends I ever had."

By what means did the American Consul get this half-saved equerry to talk as freely as Rousseau ever talked? Simply by that power of sympathy which is the magnetism of the mind. No man (hypocrites especially excepted) could feel the grasp of Orchard's hand, could meet the glance of his clear, friendly eyes, and not feel that with him there need be no secrets. The ancient question of Confession is agitating the Church while I write: and doubtless there

will be a fierce fight about it ere long. I am not going to meddle with polemics. This is a world in which prudent men carefully conceal their strongest opinions. Enough to say that Julian Orchard was born to be a Father Confessor—which cannot be the case with all the priesthoods of all the Faiths. If he met a country girl in a silvan walk, she would tell him all about her sweetheart in ten minutes, though she dared not mention him to her mother. This son of the stables talked as feely as if he had known him all his life. It was just the same in higher life. Ministers of State and diplomatists could not help being candid with Orchard. The President had marked him down for a high diplomatic mission the next time the Great Commonwealth should have momentous business on hand.

“Orchard is a perfect Ambassador!” said

Grant. "He cannot tell a lie himself: and if anybody is to tell him a lie and not be found out, you must drag Satan from Hell to do it."

But we are at the gates of Carey Farm. The Consul drives in beneath the elms. Walter Carey and his guests, who have been eating lotos with a bad appetite, wake up at the new arrival. The tall American, perched high on the box, pulls up his horses and looks rather appalling: Tim Griffin slides to the ground, and opens the door, Sir Charles Wray descends, quiet and cool, and shakes hands with Walter Carey.

"My daughter and I happened to be in your neighbourhood, Mr. Carey," he said, "and she would not go away without seeing your sister. So here we are for half an hour, that the girls may talk. I am not sure whether you have met my friends, Count Grimani and Mr. Shirley, before.

We were so merry at Southpool in the Regatta week that I almost forget who made acquaintance with whom. But you recollect Mr. Orchard, probably, the American Consul there, who is a famous author? He has driven us over from Chessington."

Frances had been eagerly watching for an arrival, but had not expected an invasion. She and Cecilia greeted each other in the friendliest way: but before that greeting she had caught courage from a glance of Gabriel Shirley's eye. The two ladies vanished together, as is the way with ladies: and when Gabriel Shirley looked round, he noted that Major Washington F. Butts seemed very much as if he would like to vanish too. The consular eye was fixed on him, and he clearly did not like it.

"Ah," thought Shirley, "the illustrious poet was right:

‘This world of ours is but a world of dreams :  
Even that Yankee is not what he seems.’”

Which was true enough, for Butts seemed, or tried to seem, a man of capital—and had not a farthing in the world.

While Walter Carey gathers his party together into the dining-room, and offers them the good hospitality of Carey Farm, we will follow the ladies upstairs. See them, in Frances’s own room, whose two pleasant windows, fringed with wistaria, look across the lawn to the river.

Cecilia, that creature of mirth and melody, finds something motherly in Frances. They look at each other, needing no words. But Cecilia must speak.

“He loves me so, Frances. He is so noble. I am sure we shall be happy. But O how selfish I am, to talk about myself at the very first.”

“Why not, my darling?” said Frances.

And there was much more confidence between them, Frances being all the while a little doubtful whether her beautiful young Cecilia had quite enough in her to hold firmly the restless poetic Italian. Frances could not catch the fascination of Cecilia . . . the music that was not heard in her voice only, but seemed to pervade every movement. Cecilia was incarnate melody. She had no hard clear intellect, no knowledge, not an atom of common sense; she had not an idea about money or dinner or politics or religion; she was all rainbow and butterfly . . . Iris and Psyche. The very bride for Count Cassius.

Frances and Cecilia, coming down, found a hasty luncheon, and everybody busy at it. The party had become rather pleasant already. Sir Charles Wray and Lavington found that they had a hundred common acquaintances: Captain Heath and Shirley

joined in the conversation : matters went on so pleasantly that Butts and Lyon began to hope there was no terror in this sudden invasion. Hence ensued a general talk : and the Honourable Hércules Lyon, having once decided that he was in no danger, broke out fluently. We, who know who he is, and what he has done, may wonder at the audacity which he has shown in meeting those who ought to know him best. But perils of all kinds become trivial to the man who encounters them often : Lyon had got through so many difficulties that he began to think he was perfectly safe. Never was man so easy to be found out. What amazed him was that, while his father had not the slightest suspicion, he could see that Frances had eyes keen enough to penetrate his rather vulgar disguise. Of this all along an uneasy suspicion had haunted him. Oddly enough, now that the crisis was approaching,



he was thrown off his guard; he did not connect this sudden visit of Sir Charles Wray and his friends with anything personal to himself; so he talked away behind his American mask, acting a part, and acting it very well. A painful part to the actor. The deliberate hypocrite is the most unpleasant of human beings, and always makes me shudder. But hypocrites, like the rest of the reptile tribe, must be of some use in the world, or they would never have existed.

When this scratch luncheon was over, everybody went out: and Frances, who as yet had not an opportunity of talking to Gabriel Shirley, did all she could to secure a few quiet words with him. As she had no lady-ally (Cecilia being *hors de combat*, and entirely monopolized by Count Cassius), her difficulty was so to break up the party that she could have a slight colloquy with

Gabriel. This gave her some trouble, but was effected at last.

"Ah," he said, in a low tone, as they diverged from the others a few yards, "so our martyred railway-guard is close at hand!"

"Yes. Please tell me what is best to do. I know it will be all right—but O you don't know how anxious I am!"

"Don't I?" replied Shirley. "I was a child myself once. I was never beloved by a railway-guard, you know——"

"Now don't be provoking. I know you would not joke about it if you had any fear as to what will happen: but the excitement has made me dreadfully nervous, and I hate anything concealed: and I do hope it will be all over to-day."

"Of course it will," said Gabriel Shirley. "My dear Miss Carey, *you* ought to be the last to feel nervous. The time has come to

settle everything, and to expose this scoundrel Heath. The only thing to be done now is to bring our young friend forward. Tell me where to find him."

Frances explained, and easily made Gabriel Shirley understand where Hugh Roland was lying in ambush.

"I will unearth him," he said. "Go and talk to the others, and keep them together. They won't miss me till I return."

Frances, obeying, went forward, and joined Captain Heath and Lavington. Shirley's broad shoulders disappeared among the trees.

## CHAPTER XI.

## DEUS EX MACHINA.

RAPHAEL.—Homer wrote nonsense, making gods and  
goddesses

Encounter mortals both in bed and battlefield.

These are child's fables.

ASTROLOGOS.— Noble Prince, talk warily :  
How many senses have you ?

RAPHAEL.— Five.

ASTROLOGOS.— I have seven senses.

One gives me power to see things never visible

To you. This moment I beheld bright Iris pass

Over that arch of rainbow that is glittering

From hill to hill. I have seen brawny Herakles

Foiling an army. Trust me, your five senses, sir,

Are not the high completion of humanity.

*The Comedy of Dreams.*

GUIDED by the directions of Frances,  
and by his own typologic intuitions,

Gabriel Shirley found the workshop in which she had hidden her prisoner. He was much amused at the situation. Always sanguine, from the moment he found Hugh Roland in his cottage, he had believed that his troubles would be conquered: but his being brought suddenly face to face with the man he was supposed to have murdered was a dramatic incident hardly to be foreseen. Shirley thought over it with great glee as he crossed the farm-yard towards Hugh Roland's loft. Nobody was near. He ascended the steps, and tried the latch. Hugh, who had scrutinized his visitor through a hole in the wood, at once unlocked the door and let him in. He closed the door after him: there they stood in the dim light, amid Frances Carey's innumerable arrangements of chemistry and horticulture and carpentry.

"Ah, my friend," said Shirley, cheerily,

“so the fifth act of our drama has arrived. Tragedy or comedy—which will it be? You, at least, will have good reason to be satisfied, after all your troubles. You have been patient, and Miss Carey has been faithful, and now you will both have your reward.”

“I have not been very patient,” said Hugh, “but I have managed to wait, and now I suppose my time is come. What am I to do?”

He spoke with a repressed eagerness, which Mr. Shirley well understood. Would you have a man quite serenely patient under such a grievance as Hugh Roland's? Patience is preached in the oldest poem extant, but modern thought does not find a quite satisfactory ideal in the Man of Uz. Impatience is a great power; it has extinguished many tyrannies; it is the bitter enemy of injustice. When I see a man

earnestly asserting his rights, at the risk of being set down as a turbulent troublesome fellow, I cannot help sympathizing with him. It is too much the way of the world to side with established power. "Possession is nine points of the law," says some old adage, and it exemplifies the feelings of the torpid majority. The general public acquiesced in the theory that Hugh Roland was a criminal lunatic: Hugh knew that he wasn't, but he might very well have been in a minority of one on the question.

"We have quite a party here," said Gabriel Shirley. "Carey's guests you have heard of, I think. I have just come with Sir Charles Wray and his daughter, and an Italian gentleman, and the American Consul at Southpool, who may be of use, as he knows the swindling people who came over with Heath. I just tell you this to prepare you for seeing a lot of people. Now is

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your time; we shall find them all walking in the grounds."

Hugh said no word. The two set off together, passed quickly through farmyard and barton, came upon the loiterers close by the river. Yes, they were grouped on that green glade, with the silver stream flowing below, where, little more than a year ago, Frances had been affrighted by what seemed the traces of a horrible murder. She could laugh at the reminiscence now. She and Cecilia were grouped with Count Cassius and the tall American Consul, who was poetically discoursing on the difference between the world's two continents. Carey and Heath were in conversation; so were Lavington and Butts; the Honourable Hercules Lyon stood moodily alone, smoking a cigar, and looking at the river.

"You call America the New World," the



Consul was saying. "Agassiz has shown that it is older than Asia, which is the oldest part of your continent. Go into the Yosemite valley, and look at the big trees ; you haven't had time to grow such trees in Asia ; and as to Europe, why, it only began to be colonized a little before Homer's time. There are vast unexplored tracts in South and Central America, where great nations existed before Troy, before Thebes, before Babylon. When your Royal Geographical Society is tired of Africa, let it send some pioneers up our untraversed rivers."

Thus flowed the Consul's talk as Gabriel Shirley and Hugh Roland came down the grassy slope. Frances saw them first—no wonder : every moment seemed to her at least a month. How glad she felt to see her prisoner released at last, and coming bravely among them by Gabriel Shirley's side ! There was a humorous twitch about

Shirley's mouth as they passed close to Captain Heath and Carey, both of whom turned to look at Roland, both of whom recognised him instantly.

Walter sprang forward.

"Roland!" he exclaimed.

He would have collared him, but Mr. Shirley interposed his sturdy frame, and said,

"Don't be hasty. He is *my* prisoner."

"He is a murderer," said Captain Heath, fiercely. "He killed my boy. He ought to be hanged. Are you a policeman, sir?"

By this time everyone present was interested in the scene. Stephen Heath, who had been sulkily smoking nearer the river margin, was the last to recognize his ancient rival. When he did, he remained immovable, and went on with his cigar. He did not think his disguise had been penetrated. He had deceived his father and Carey, and

thought that no one else was likely to fathom his disguise. He did not particularly like the idea of meeting Hugh Roland, and he could not understand how Hugh dare venture to be seen ; but he assumed an air of stolid indifference, and looked on as if he were an uninterested spectator. Not so Major Washington F. Butts, who felt sure something dangerous was about to happen.

Hugh Roland as yet had not spoken. He advanced toward Frances.

"Miss Carey," he said, "I am not a murderer, or I would not venture into your presence." Then, turning to Captain Heath, he went on: "Your son is alive, sir. He is here. You have been long in his company. I forgive you for thinking me a murderer, but I do not forgive him for trying to bring on me a murderer's doom. *There is Stephen Heath !*"

He pointed to the scoundrel ; then, care-

lessly turning away, he looked to Frances for a rewarding glance of loving sympathy, and received it. As to Count Cassius, he caught Hugh's hand in both his own, exclaiming,

"This is glorious! It is a poem!"

"Write a poem on the theme, Count," said the Consul. "Miss Carey will make a perfect heroine."

When Roland uttered his last words, both Captain Heath and Carey recognized Stephen Heath at once. All along they had had the undefined feeling that he was like somebody they knew; identified, he was unmistakeable, and they wondered he could have deceived them for a moment. The poor old soldier was thunderstruck; far rather would he have had his son honourably dead than alive in this disgraceful disguise. He walked towards him, but his powers failed. Gabriel Shirley, who had

been narrowly watching him, caught him by the arm, saying.

“Come, Captain Heath, this is too much for you. Come in with me and rest.”

He took him away. It was well he did. Meanwhile Walter Carey came up to Hugh Roland with outstretched hand, saying,

“Forgive me, Hugh. I was wrong, and I am sorry for it. Let us be friends.”

“Always,” said Roland, with a friendly grip, and with a glance at Frances.

“O, my sister will not object,” said Walter, maliciously.

At this moment Boyd came up, and told Walter some one wanted to speak to him. He found that it was the superintendent of police from Chessington, who, with a London detective, had come in search of Major Washington F. Butts and the Honourable Hercules Lyon for uttering forged bank-notes.

"I don't like disturbing your party, Mr. Carey," said the Superintendent, "but these two Americans we must have, and so I hope you'll say I did my duty as easy as I could. This is Inspector Lynx, from Scotland Yard."

"Ah, Mr. Lynx," said Walter. "Of course you remember our famous murder last year?"

"O yes, sir. Mr. Roland killed Mr. Heath: found a lunatic: since escaped. We have it all down."

"Listen," said Walter, with serious emphasis. "Roland did *not* kill Heath. Heath is now alive, and is the man you have to arrest as Hercules Lyon. His father has just recognized him."

"By Jove, sir," said Lynx, "that's about as surprising a thing as ever I heard in my life—and I've heard one or two. Well, sir, I'm much obliged to you: now may I go and take my men?"

Walter had been talking to the two policemen in a kind of woodland recess. He showed them how to go through the trees to the point they wanted to reach, and then hurried round to Frances and Cecilia.

"Frances, I want to speak to you," he said. "Come with us, Miss Wray."

He gave Count Cassius a look which the Count understood, and they all went together. But Hugh Roland instinctively stayed behind. Besides him only Sir Charles and the Consul and Lavington remained to see these two stalwart gentlemen in blue take possession of the Major and his comrade. Lynx touched Major Butts on the shoulder: the Superintendent approached Stephen Heath with even greater politeness.

"What does this mean?" said Sir Charles Wray?

"Bank-note forgeries, sir," said the Superintendent. "Very well-known Americans.

It's all right. I spoke to Mr. Carey first, and he took the ladies away."

"I know that fellow Butts to be a swindler, Sir Charles," said the Consul, "so we may guess the other man is."

At this moment "the other man" distinguished himself. His sulky mood had changed into one of ferocity. He turned on the Superintendent, who, though a big man, was somewhat flabby, with a mad suddenness, hurled him on the ground, and made a spring into the river, which at that point was deep and rapid. It turns a corner, narrowing suddenly within a border of rock. Stephen Heath sprang into the worst part. It was sharp work for the best of swimmers.

"He can't swim a stroke," said Hugh Roland, and threw off his coat and shoes and jumped in after him. But Heath had been sucked into the whirling water, and



was carried far beyond Hugh Roland's reach. So he had not the delight of saving his enemy from death : and Inspector Lynx was obliged to be satisfied with one prisoner only. Stephen Heath's corpse was carried miles down the river, and was not brought ashore for some days. It looked very unlike that other which had been recognised, and buried as his, and which probably was the mortal coil of some vagrant weary of life.

But Captain Heath knew nothing of this : the sudden shock had paralysed him, and it was indeed a long time before he thoroughly recovered himself, if indeed he ever did so. And Frances and Cecilia escaped all knowledge of it for awhile : but Frances in time learnt what had happened, and pitied the poor foolish fellow, and thought little more about it. She was glad she had not seem him spring into the stream ; glad that

she had not seen him dead ; glad that Hugh Roland had gallantly tried to save him. Hugh that day had reappeared in some of Walter's clothes, but they fitted him fairly, and Frances was too occupied to notice it.

When Captain Heath recovered himself, he entirely forgot his son's existence. It was the only point on which memory deserted him. He could recollect just as well as ever what cards had been played at whist. But Stephen had vanished from his memory as completely as a schoolboy's last sum is sponged from his slate. It was lucky for him. His faithful servant, Boyd, looked after him. The Captain gave up his idea of Frances, apparently ; nor was he again extremely attentive to the lady who had appropriated the name of Clinton. He did not rebuild Heathfield : he resided much abroad, choosing places famous for play, and breaking the bank now and then with

great *éclat*. We may drop the poor old gentleman at this point: Avonside saw him no more. But there remains a tradition among the new generation that nobody ever came so punctually to church, or said the responses so emphatically. He is a figure of the past in that quiet village. So well-brushed a hat, so severe a countenance, so careful an utterer of liturgic responses, will not be seen in Avonside Church again.

Sir Charles Wray took the command that afternoon, and kept matters quiet.

"Miss Carey and my daughter," he said, when the ladies were out of the way, "must know nothing of what has happened. Butts and the other man are gone—that is all. I don't want Cecilia troubled with horrors: and I think your sister, Mr. Carey, has had so much to suffer that she need not now be subjected to any more worry. She will know in time. She will also know that

Mr. Roland chivalrously tried to save the scoundrel."

"The less she knows about it the better, Sir Charles," said Hugh Roland. "I jumped into the water without thinking, I am afraid : if I had thought, I should not have considered him worth jumping after."

"Ah," quoth Shirley, "as the illustrious poet hath it :

'The man must have small brain and plenteous breath,  
Who'd save a rival from a watery death.' "

## CHAPTER XII.

## THE TALK OF AVONSIDE.

“Do some dire deed in the least of England’s villages,  
And all the capitals in the world shall ring with it.”

THIS was a second sensation for Avon-  
side, greater even than the first I had  
to record : the village talked about it as no  
village ever talked before. And so the  
news travelled ; and of course the London  
papers had definite intelligence about it.  
Really the “special correspondent” is a  
remarkable product of the age. How is it  
that a lunatic cannot escape from an asylum,  
or an irritable gentleman murder his mother-  
in-law, without the cognizance of three or

four special correspondents? They stoop down on the spot, as surely as vultures on a carcase. Go, dear reader, if you are of an experimental turn of mind, into the loneliest part of Dartmoor : take with you the only woman you ever loved : kill her. A special correspondent will meet you in ten minutes, and politely extract from you all you know about yourself. This will be in the morning papers before you are in the hands of the police.

Avonside effervesced with excitement. The little barber, who invented romantic additions to the story, had to cut everybody's hair for a week, and got no customers in that line for six months after. There was a general feeling of satisfaction in the village. Nobody much liked Stephen Heath : everybody did like Hugh Roland. Oddly enough, the people who liked Hugh best, had rather a contempt for him. He gave

them the idea of being able to do much more than he ever did. He used to be on friendly terms with the cottagers; to come and talk to them as if he were their equal; to help them in a friendly way, as if he were one of themselves, no idea of patronage or condescension entering his healthy brain. But the shrewd cottagers—and your English peasant hath a famous amount of shrewdness—used to be of opinion that Mr. Hugh might be doing something better.

“It’s very kind of him,” said Dame Raggett, when he had talked to her for half an hour (or rather listened to her abuse of the parson and the relieving officer) and left a piece of silver behind him—“it’s very kind of him, but it’s a pity he does nothing for himself.”

As a fact, Hugh Roland had done nothing for himself, except to fall in love with Frances—a most wise act. That Frances

was popular in Avonside may well be supposed; her customary wisdom deserted her when she had to deal with the poor, and she gave too freely to satisfy the political economists. Hugh also was popular . . . doubly so when the village public talked of him as Miss Frances's sweetheart. How the village guesses at all these things! There must be some universal intuition which enables the merest boors to discover when the social atmosphere far above them is erotic. They seem sometimes to know all about it before the principals themselves have made up their minds. I can understand a man's valet knowing he is in love before he knows it himself, and possibly a lady's-maid can fathom the secrets of her mistress's brain as she arranges her back hair. The cosmets are clairvoyante. But somehow or other the dullest country folk seem able to look through brick walls when there is any



love-making in progress within. What is the secret of this? Love enlightens lovers, well I know; but does love also enlighten the crowd of bystanders? Has it an electric power outside its actual working? Not unlikely. You may feel electricity in the air without being personally struck by lightning.

Avonside's verdict on Stephen Heath was certainly "Served him right." Avonside pitied Captain Heath, whose regular attendance at church, with a well-brushed hat, an unimpeachable silk umbrella, and the latest edition of the Prayer-book, had given him a character which remote rumours of his London irregularities could not injure. The Captain was as much missed in Avonside as Lockhart's immortal Captain Paton in Edinburgh. He left a blank in the place, which nobody else could fill up.

On the afternoon of the catastrophe, the visitors at Carey Farm quickly dispersed. Sir Charles and his friends had some light refreshment; then he and his daughter and the Count started for Monckton Manor, the Consul being their fellow-traveller, as he was returning to Southpool. Lavington went rather gloomily to London, where his cousin had no good news to cheer him. But Gabriel Shirley remained behind, at the special request of Walter and Hugh, who felt that at this moment his advice would be of use to them. Walter so strongly reproached himself with having believed Hugh to be a murderer that he had a passionate eagerness to make up for his blunder in every way. He was only too willing to give him his sister. He would have given him half his property, if he had needed and would have taken it. Walter had an obstinate character, intractable and

inflexible ; but if the conviction that he was wrong could be forced upon him, he felt a remorseful anxiety to make amends. On this occasion, having tracked Hugh Roland as a murderer, having been utterly deceived by Heath, having acted unfairly, if not unkindly, to his sister, he was very angry with himself.

A strange mixture of pleasure and pain there was just now at Carey Farm. Poor Captain Heath was in bed, a doctor in attendance, and his faithful servitor Boyd looking carefully after him. Rachel did not neglect him ; her kind old heart was always drawn to anyone in trouble or pain.

“ I’ll help that Irishman to look after the Captain, Miss Rachel,” she said. “ He’s in what your father used to call a comb-dose state, and must be watched till he gets back his conscience. You go and talk to Mr. Hugh, miss ; he hasn’t had much pleasure

lately. And go and see Miss Hutchison at once: she'll be so delighted."

So, when the Consul had started for Chessington with Sir Charles and the rest, Frances and Walter and Hugh and Mr. Shirley crossed the fields to the Hollies. It was a lovely afternoon. Miss Carey's dogs were riotous in the grass. She, almost happy, walked by Hugh Roland's side: they talked little: they were together . . . which was enough. The air was cool and crisp and clear: already a touch of sunset light was in the west—as if the torches were being lighted in the halls of Apollo to greet him after his long drive around the world.

How did Frances feel, this Autumn afternoon, with all the trouble over, and her lover by her side? She had as yet been unable to analyse her feelings. She walked silently by Hugh Roland's side, thinking. Now that he was freed from his tribulations, she began

to wonder a little whether she had been loving him alone, or him and his troubles also—whether, now that Hugh Roland was no longer a convicted murderer, he had quite the same power over her. Love has its endless casuistry. If Hugh had been hanged, Frances would have remained single and worn mourning for the remainder of her life: but now that he was free, now that the Home Secretary would be compelled to indulge in that ponderous jest called “the Queen’s pardon,” she hardly felt him quite so dear . . . at least she feared not. Had she added something in her imagination to the real Hugh? She was perplexed to say. She walked along in maiden meditation, but not fancy-free.

As for Hugh, he was in the land of triumph. He had no idea that the beautiful girl by his side had any such doubts in her brain. He had dived deep in a sea of

trouble, and had emerged again into the atmosphere of life and love. He built delicious castles in the air; he did not need to hear his lady's voice; she stepped beside him—that was quite enough.

The same sun shone upon these twain: they saw the same grass, the same trees. Gabriel Shirley and Walter, following them along the fragrant meadow-track, thought of them as two lovers, one in heart and mind. Yet they were at this time distinctly separate. As Frances at intervals turned a slight glance on Roland's face, which seemed triumphantly content, she sadly reproached herself.

“Do I really love him?” she thought. “Was it only his grief and his wicked treatment that made me think I loved him? Have I been faithful all this long while, now to be faithless? O dear me! I wish he was back in his loft again, and I could keep him

under lock and key till I made up my mind."

I wonder what Hugh Roland would have said, if he could have known what Frances thought. Luckily for him, he believed she was just as happy as himself. He saw everything, that afternoon, through


"The light that never was, on sea or land."

He trod the earth as if he trod the air. He wanted from his lady no sweet words, sweet as the whisper of the nightingale: her perfect presence was enough for him. He is not the only man, by any means, who has walked through field and wood with the lady he loved without the remotest idea of what was in her mind.

Meanwhile Gabriel Shirley was studying Walter Carey, of whom as yet he had a slight outside opinion; and it occurred to the old humourist that Walter was a man who could be much better than he was. This

perhaps may be said of most men ; but what Shirley perceived in Walter was that he did not fix an ideal for himself. When a man has reached maturity he should test his faculties ; decide how much he can do ; decide to do it. To examine yourself from the bystander's point of view will generally humiliate you ; to examine yourself from your own point of view, knowing what no one save God and yourself can know of your weaknesses, is a sterner test of character. Dig a mine into your own soul, my friend : you will find plentiful mud ; you may find diamonds in that mud.

Through the divine autumnal afternoon our party of four approached the Hollies, and passed under a well-cut wall of evergreens to Miss Hutchison's door. The old lady, sitting in her red parlour, with some knitting about, and a wise gray parrot blinking in its brass cage, looked a picture of





tranquillity ; but she was repressing herself, for rumours about her nephew had reached her, and when she saw him she rose from her chair, caught him by both hands, and cried with a tremulous voice,


“Thank God, Hugh, for all his mercies!”

And then a sudden accession of strength came to her, and she stood upright, and said, with a voice marvellously clear,

“My boy has been proved innocent. I always knew it. I am quite happy now. Frances, you will marry him now, will you not?”

The old lady, in her strong delight, forgot altogether that her well-beloved Frances might not like such a question asked her so publicly. Hugh Roland saw a troubled expression on Frances’s face, and led his aunt back to her seat, and said,


“Frances and I will settle all that in time, dear aunt.”



He had no doubts, but he did not wish Frances to be troubled.

“Ah,” said Miss Hutchison, in a low clear audible tone, as if soliloquizing, “I have thought over this, many days, many nights. I sit in this corner, Hugh, and look down the meadow . . . and O how many and many a time I have seen somebody pass, and thought ‘Is it Hugh coming up the foot path?’ And at night, lying awake, hour upon hour, I have thought I heard your step on the gravel. O I know your step, Hugh my boy, as well as if I was your sweetheart. You are the last of us, Hugh ; I want you to be a good man—and a great man, if you can. To make a man good and great there is nothing but the love of a good woman ; and the boy has yours, Frances, has he not ?”

Frances, who had tears in her eyes as the dear old lady grew so eloquent, looked



round at Hugh. She saw in his countenance a painful longing for a word from her. His look moved her deeply. There was in it something of the look of a highly intelligent dog that does not quite understand what his master wants, and is intensely anxious to understand it. Frances was more finely strung than Hugh; had a nature which, though strong, was curiously sensitive; could bear a great trouble more admirably than some trifle of the nerves. And now she was indeed bearing a terrible trouble; for she could not determine whether she ought to have been so faithful to Hugh; and she could not decide whether he was capable of being her master. Hugh had no more idea of the thoughts that traversed her brain than the wayfarer has of the telegraphic messages that flash through the roadside wires. But when he heard Miss Hutchison's plaintive and pathetic discourse he rose to the occasion, and said :

"Aunt, you have always been kind to me—too kind, perhaps. Now I am come back to take care of you, if you will let me. Frances will tell me what she thinks about other things, when we are alone together. There is no hurry."

*There is no hurry.* I think Frances considered this rather a cool speech of Mr. Roland's. Did it pique her a little?

Quoth Gabriel Shirley:

"The illustrious poet hath something on this theme . . .

'Love that is languid wants a spice of fun ;  
Love in a hurry may be overdone.'

I think, Miss Hutchison, that our young friends will very soon settle their affairs if no one interferes with them. They are children, you know: you and I, who are wise old people, can afford to smile at the troubles they make for themselves. We all make troubles for ourselves, you know,

and we begin making them so very early. Indeed, it may be said that the chief business of age is curing oneself of the maladies one caught and encouraged in youth."

"Frances, we are dismissed," said Hugh. "Let us stroll out upon the lawn while our wise elders discuss the extreme improbability of our ever being as wise as they."

Frances, laughing, followed him out into the pleasant gardens of the Hollies. Gabriel Shirley, when they were gone, said to Miss Hutchison :

"Your nephew has had a trial, but I think it will be good for him. I hope Miss Carey and he will make up their minds to marry, and to marry soon. He is younger than she is . . ."

"O no," interrupted the old lady.

"I mean, not in actual years," said Gabriel Shirley, "but in mind. Hugh is a boy still : Miss Carey is quite a matured woman,

though with all the fresh bloom of youth about her."

"I fear she is too good for him" sighed the old lady.

"Not at all. Roland is a fine fellow, as his career proves. Look at what he has had to endure, Miss Hutchison. To be accused of murder; treated as a maniac; hunted down by the police; obliged to live in disguise and do porter's work! He comes out of it well. Lucky for him, I think, that his growth has been slow, and that he has kept his boyishness: else perhaps he could not have endured all this. And now Miss Frances, who is well-developed, can take him as a pupil."

"Frances Carey is my dear friend, Mr. Shirley," said Miss Hutchison: "and she is a woman of a thousand; and if I could see her married to Hugh I could die happy."

"Much better to live happy, Miss Hutchi-

son," says the old gentleman. "No need for you to die, that I can see. The young people will get on all the better for your kind and wise advice : and why should not you enjoy for a long while the happiness of seeing them happy ? Although Miss Carey is a wonderfully wise little woman for her years, she will be none the worse for your advice and guidance. To my mind, the present generation moves too fast : I would not let them come of age till thirty, if I could help it. Your nephew and Miss Carey are marriageable in the eye of the law : but the eye of the law is apt to suffer from strabismus."

Miss Hutchison did not wholly follow this quaint old gentleman ; but, where he grew unintelligible, she got the kind of satisfaction which some ancient lady is said to have derived from Whitefield's way of uttering the word *Mesopotamia*. And she

liked his courtly style and stately quotations; and she fancied she remembered many of the latter in her favourite poet, William Cowper; and these two had a pleasant old-fashioned parlour-window talk while Frances and Hugh were talking in quite another way under the lime avenue. The leaves, though yellow, abounded still; the robin rang out his familiar lilt; now and then a startled blackbird chuckled. There was mistletoe high up in those lime-branches, if Hugh had needed a material excuse for kissing his lady's lips.

"Hugh," said Frances, first to speak, "*there is no hurry*. You said so. Have we both made up our minds? Had we not better wait a little?"

A perfect picture of beauty she looked, as the slant sunlight came on her through the leaf canopy, while a blush flitted over her cheek as she put this query. Tall, quiet,



grave, yet with a curve of humour on her upper lip, and a faint rose-blush upon her cheek that told its own tale . . . to Hugh Roland.

He simply put his arm round her waist and kissed her. Having performed this feat, he said,

“Frances, my darling, my mind has always been made up, and I don’t mean to let you alter yours. You belong to me, and I mean to have you. I know what it is; you don’t think I am man enough for you.”

“O Hugh!”

“You don’t. I have always behaved like a boy. I never thought much till I began to think of you. That made a man of me. Then came my sudden troubles: I could not have got through them, except for the thought of you. They have made me feel older. I think I am almost worthy of you, Frances. If not now, I *will* be.”

Frances Carey saw well that he was in earnest—more in earnest perhaps than she ever had been. She admired his boyish resolve. She had ere now built her quiet castles in the air, with Hugh as cotenant; thought what a docile husband he would be, and how she could manage him, and make a fine fellow of him. That was her theory, and it is the theory of many a handsome and able woman; but it seldom gets properly worked out. The fine fellows don't get made; or if they do, they make slaves of the women who want to manage them.

It began to dawn on Frances that perhaps she had better take Hugh with all his faults of immaturity, and leave him to grow into manhood without too active management. Her eyes seemed to say so, with a soft scintilla of love in their divine depths. Hugh

knew the token, and kissed her on the eye lids.

That evening, when Hugh Roland sought Gabriel Shirley's room for a quiet talk, after a pleasant time with his lady-love and her now most courteous brother, the old gentleman said :

“I think you will find in Miss Carey what I consider a most perfect wife. A true wife has three functions to fulfil. She is your mother, teaching you many things, punishing you when you deserve it, nursing you in all your troubles. She is your daughter, learning from you, obeying you, receiving help and comfort from you. She is your very self, sharing your glory and grief, your triumph and trouble . . . being in fact not a part of you, but your inborn inseparable self. The miserable failures of married life are caused by men and women who cannot understand these things.”

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"Are they so hard to understand?" asked Hugh Roland.

"Yes," replied Gabriel Shirley, "thanks to the invincible conceit of people who want the universe made their own way. God made it admirably, to my mind; and he ordained marriage as the noblest out-come of the race. Ask me what I think the finest thing to be seen and I say: *Man and Wife*. Carry out my theory, Hugh. Be your own wife's father; teach her all you know; treat her with paternal kindness and discipline. But be also your wife's son: accept thankfully her teaching and guidance. And above all, become one with her: give and take: learn to regard her as yourself, and yourself as her. That is marriage. It makes two one. It makes man woman and woman man . . . or rather makes of the twain that which is sexless and perfect. Man and wife, true man and wife, are one: if one dies, the

other is dead also. Their union is too intimate to admit of division. Their spirits will mingle elsewhere, but the survivor on this planet is a mere lay-figure or residuum.

Thus lectured Gabriel Shirley.

"You surely must have been a married man," quoth Hugh, "to know so much about it. You talk as one who has learned by experience."

"I was not fortunate enough to learn by experience," said Mr. Shirley. "When you were a child unborn death brought me my great grief. Time has mellowed that grief, and I know that I shall overtake my darling up the lovely path of the Mountain of Light. She will loiter for me, Hugh. I only fear she will think I keep her too long waiting. As the illustrious poet hath it :

'I hear her whisper, through the realms of pain,  
Come home, dear Gabriel, and be young again.'

"I perceive the illustrious poet was think-

ing of you specially when he wrote that couplet," said Roland, mischievously. "And I deny your theory altogether; for you, though a solitary survivor, are not a lay-figure or residuum by any means. Mine is no wide or long experience, but I certainly know no one with so strong a character as yours."

"I like flattery, I admit, even from a boy," replied Gabriel Shirley, with a humorous twinkle in his eye. In the lime-alley, where the sunlight slanted through yellowing leaves, the old gentleman seemed thoroughly at home—as well suited to English silvan garden as faun to Greek forest, or naiad to Greek stream. "Yes, Hugh, I like your flattery, and you may regard me as a strong character if you like . . . but you don't know what I might have been. When I lost for this planet the beautiful soul that awaits me elsewhere, I gave

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up all idea of being a worker. I became a bystander. As a bystander I have watched the drama of life: I have sometimes indeed so far interfered as to become a prompter. What I can do for myself is a question for the future—postponed until I rejoin my other self. Meanwhile I watch tragedy and comedy. I see you play the hero and Miss Carey the heroine. When I played the prompter's part, I hope it was rightly done."

Hugh Roland was thoughtfully silent awhile.

"I must think over what you have said, Mr. Shirley. Your belief that, having lost the lady you loved, you could not do your work in the world . . . for so I understand you . . ."

"Rightly," said Shirley.

"That belief makes me regard in a new way the relation between man and woman.

I cannot conceive you—what shall I say?—greater . . . better . . . well, more influential than you are. Yet you think you would have had a higher career if . . .”

“*Think!* I know it. Take yourself into counsel. You have stuff in you; but Frances Carey will make you ten times the man you are. You won’t know yourself in a dozen years.”



## CHAPTER XIII.

## SPRING AND LOVE.

*"Cras amet qui nunqu'amavit,  
Qui qu'amavit cras amet."*

AT Monckton Manor in the month of May there was a delightful gathering. Spring was early. The birds had forestalled Saint Valentine. Anacreon's swallows had forgotten Memphis. It was one of those happy years when Demeter, the immortal earth-mother, seems to renew her youth; when she is lavish of sunlight and flower-bloom; and when Aphrodite is born again from the ocean and Dionysus sets out to conquer a new Asia and woo another Ariadne. There

are sullen hidebound years, when Spring is all east wind and black frost, when songbirds starve and maidens wither and the blood of the world seems stagnant. In such years let no man marry. They are sterile, sombre, severe. At such a time Nature may give us a Stuart Mill, but never a Byron—a Darwin, but by no chance a Shakespeare. When the sweet South is master of winds, and banks are white with violets, and the cuckoo-sings all day, and the nightingales spoil your sleep, and every brook has its wooing naiad and every tree its haunting hamadryad . . . then marry.

It was a marrying year when two weddings were fixed for celebration at Monckton Manor. Of course a large party assembled: of course there were the inevitable bridesmaids and young gentlemen unattached: but all our friends were there—not forgetting Tom Cornish, who was for the

fourth time Mayor of the great town of Southpool, and who distinguished himself by the style of his wedding presents.

It is the day before the double wedding. Whom do we see on lawn and woodland path? There are Frances and Cecilia—the one calm as Artemis, and the other gay as Psyche—wandering together down hidden paths to the lake that is haunted by wild-fowl. Gabriel Shirley has started for a brisk walk with Hugh Roland. Count Cassius saunters up and down an avenue with Julian Orchard: the Italian gesticulates, while the American smokes. What other members of the party are doing concerns us not: no need to overhear a learned colloquy in the library between Sir Charles Wray and Tom Cornish.

Odd is it? . . . no, not odd in the least . . . that the two girls, bird-like creatures, a thrush and a wren together—that quaint

dogmatic Gabriel Shirley and impetuous Hugh—that the imaginative Consul and the equally imaginative Count—were all talking on the same theme. Odd? Assuredly not . . . for the theme was *marriage* . . . with its consequences. And these colloquies were to some extent prophetic.

Shirley and Roland walked up to the summit of Caradoc's Cairn, heretofore famous in this true story. There is a grand view from it—miles of woodland and meadow—hamlets brown and dim-discovered spires—the towers of a city far westward, that city by the sea where Tom Cornish reigns.

“Ha!” said Gabriel Shirley, when his stout lungs began to work again after the steep climb, “this is enjoyable. This refreshes. Oxygen is better than alcohol—toil than rest. I am reminded of the illustrious poet :

‘Mount bravely some steep hill where fresh winds blow :  
See your life mapped upon the plain below.’”

"I wish I could see my life mapped there," quoth Hugh. "I have won the noblest woman in the world, and my fear is to be unworthy of her."

"A most unworthy fear, unless you are at once prepared to resign her. Your life lies below you, as if on a map. There is English country, with its estates and farms : you are an Englishman, loving country life : you will have ample money between you, and the lady who is to be your wife is, of all women I ever knew, best fitted to be the mistress of a homely English household. Buy land : be a yeoman : see to your own business : grow the finest beef and mutton and corn. I do not mistake Miss Carey : around your homestead will grow up a village of happy labour. Nor do I mistake you : you will be a famous farmer—yet you will have many friends who will fill your house with intellectual enjoyment. Frances

Carey, my dear Hugh, is doubly admirable : with a mind capable of the highest and purest literature, she has the tenderest sympathy with human effort and human trouble. She can teach you to know Shakespeare, yet can be a friend to the old illiterate peasant. She wants a career : make it for her : you have the power. Buy English soil, and give friendly work to poor English folk."

"I think you are right about us," said Hugh Roland. "I take your advice, if Frances consents."

"No fear about that," quoth the old gentleman. "She was made for a lady of the land."

They descended Caradoc's Cairn in silence, Hugh Roland pondering over his adviser's wise sayings. Meanwhile, other converse went on elsewhere. The tall American had smoked much before he

spoke. When he broke silence they were under a great oak tree, looking across a park in which stood other noble trees of the same kind. Also there were many standard thorns, white with blossom, almost painig the air with scent : and amid their branches Julian Orchard noted masses of clustering green that evidently did not belong to the trees.

"Come, and let us examine this," he said to Count Cassius.

The Count did not quite comprehend, but he willingly followed. They stood beneath a fine hawthorn, and drank in its fragrance, and delighted in its show of bloom.

"The mistletoe!" said the Consul.  
"The mystic plant of the mystic race that dwelt in this land before the Pyramids were built. Then it grew on the oak : now it grows on the thorn. If the history

of that parasite could be written, it would solve half the problems of race."

"It is the white-berried thing that is held to justify kisses, I believe," observed the Count. "I have never understood why a kiss requires anything to justify it, except sweet lips, but you English have a strange logic."

"I am glad to hear you use that phrase—you English," replied the Consul. "We *are* English, such of us as are anything. Why not bring your bride to see America? It is an older continent than Asia, Africa, and Europe."

"Older?"

"Yes. Agassiz, who died a few months ago, proved that it must have had inhabitants long before Asia. We have trees larger than any grown in your hemisphere: we have ruins older. Will you come? I shall only be in England a year or two,



and by that time you and your lovely young Countess might like to find fresh poetry in altogether new scenes. Your Italian lakes are beautiful, but you should traverse our inland seas."

"The Mediterranean is the finest inland sea in the world," said Count Cassius Grimani.

I left Frances and Cecilia far away from all the rest. Both had in their hearts the deep dream of the coming day . . . the day that must change them utterly, giving them a knowledge now vaguely guessed at. There are many views of marriage, but only one that is true. Money, rank, influence, all sorts of contemptible absurdities are named in the connexion; true marriage is the connexion of the two halves of a severed soul.

The girls sat down on a log, and watched the moor-fowl dipping in the water. They

were as lovely a couple as artist ever desired to paint. The grave beauty of Frances, calm and soft and pure, was in charming contrast with Cecilia's butterfly gaiety. You would expect musical philosophy from the lips of one, lively music from the other's lips . . . loving wisdom in the eyes of Frances, and laughing love in Cecilia's. O for a pencil to sketch them in their light May apparel under a great tree by the pool of the wild-fowl!

"To-morrow," said Cecilia, in a voice like a musical cry. "Only think!"

"O, I have been thinking, my dear child, and I suppose I shall go on thinking till to-morrow comes . . . and then I shall shut my eyes, like somebody shooting the rapids on an American river, and hope to find myself all right when they open again."

"Do you think it so very dreadful?" asked the younger and livelier child. "I

do not. You know I give myself to Cassius, and I only feel like a flower on a tree. I have nothing more to say. I belong to Cassius: I shall sing for him, kiss him, do whatever he likes—do it whether he likes it or not.”

“That sounds like Irish, Cecilia. I cannot look at the matter quite in the same way. Of course I belong to Hugh, but then Hugh will want a lot of advice, and will expect me to give it, and I feel—yes, Cecilia, I do really sometimes feel as if I were going into a kind of commercial partnership—I hate the thought of that.”

“Say *No* to-morrow,” replies fearless Cecilia. “Frances, you are wiser than I in most things, but you are more foolish in this. Take my advice, and do as I do. Your Hugh is a strong man, isn’t he, and honourable, and clever?”

“Yes.”

“Then trust him—give yourself up to him. Don’t think for half a second about advising or helping him. Think of *him* only. By-and-by you can advise him as much as he likes. Why, I, though I’m a little fool, shall have to advise Cassius when he is writing songs . . . and I suppose he’ll write more than ever when he’s married.”

“If you are a little fool, you are a very wise little fool,” said Frances. “You are right: I have been wrong. I am so glad we came down here to have a talk together.”

The western sun cast gold upon them as they kissed each other beside the mere.

## CHAPTER XIV.

## THE SUMMER OF LIFE.

“Ay, there are men with whom life’s summer lasts.”

**I**T was a glorious summer day when a merry party came to pic-nic on that common above the beech-forest where stands the cottage built by Gabriel Shirley—Hugh Roland’s refuge when he fled from the Asylum. The air was ringing with music of larks; the grass was very green. Mr. Shirley’s gamecocks were crowing wildly. The brown jackass and the grey were both rolling on their backs, with all their legs in the air, too happy to think of eating. Mark Chapman was in his very best clothes—a

suit given him by Hugh in return for those that had been "requisitioned" for his service. Carry Chapman—otherwise "Fetch"—was as fresh as a wild rose in her dressy pink muslin. Mr. Gabriel Shirley, strong and prompt as ever, stood at his gate, looking for the new-comers. He had been too long in England, he thought, so his friends had arranged a farewell pic-nic before he started, heaven knows where.

Bad travelling for a four-in-hand over the road-way of that rarely-trodden heath, but the American Consul was equal to the occasion. He had a lady on the seat beside him . . . Frances Roland. Sir Charles had come, and the Count and Countess Grimani, and of course Walter Carey and Hugh. The Mayor of Southpool, at the very last moment, was obliged to give up the idea. Miss Hutchison was hard pressed to come, but feared the fatigue.

Mr. Shirley's cottage, with all its quaint arrangements, was fitly admired, while the servants unpacked the provisions. Eating and drinking are not poetic proceedings, but when done with discomfort on the grass of a common, they are less prosaic than in an ordinary dining-room. Our friends had driven far, and acquired healthy appetites. The south wind freshened them. Gabriel Shirley's gamecocks crowed. Gabriel Shirley's jackasses brayed.

"Where do you travel next, Mr. Shirley?" asked Sir Charles. "I am told your restless spirit takes you away somewhere."

"I am uncertain. I may not decide till the moment I start. I want another journey, another romance."

"A man may travel far without leaving his room," said Julian Orchard. "Now if only the Countess Grimani would sing us here that song we had a few nights ago."

.

"Do you expect me to sing beneath the skylarks, Mr. Orchard?" said Cecilia. "Birds can laugh, you know. I had a jackdaw that quite humiliated me by laughing at me."

"O, give us the song, Cecilia," said Frances.

She sang :

"There is travel deep in woods,  
And travel high in air,  
And travel over wide green seas,  
And amid the cities fair.

"You may follow the wandering swallow,  
Or the passionate nightingale,  
Dip for pearls with the diver,  
Into the sunset sail.

"But more than yield the wide seas,  
More than the air above,  
A man may find in his own heart  
And the heart of his own true love."

"A very compendious art of travel," said Mr. Gabriel Shirley. "Since I have had the honour of knowing the two newly-mar-



ried ladies present, I have thought that every woman's heart is an unexplored continent. But it seems to me, if I may say it in these ladies' presence, that women are double-natured ; that in the finer temperaments there is often an outer segment quite different from that which lies within. It is very impertinent of me, I fear, Count Cassius, but I cannot help saying that beneath the gay whimsical musical nature of the Countess Grimani there is a marvellous amount of intuitive wisdom."

"O, you are saying what is exactly true, Mr. Shirley," said Frances impetuously. "Cecilia is a great deal wiser than I am. She has taught me what I should never have guessed."

"Ah," said Gabriel Shirley, gravely, "then the illustrious poet was right :

'A man may have some genius now and then :  
Woman is genius, thus transcending men.' "

“Shirley,” said Roland laughing, “if you mean really to travel, let it be in search of a wife. That is what you want, any one can see.”

The dews were falling when the horses were put in. Mr. Gabriel Shirley, soon after sunrise the next morning, took staff and knapsack, and left the cottage on his travel—in search of what? Perhaps he murmured this couplet from “the illustrious poet” :

“For other fields, for other trees, I yearn :  
What shall I find ? A longing to return.”

THE END.

1. The first part of the document is a list of names and titles, including "The Hon. Mr. Justice" and "The Hon. Mr. Justice".

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